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Cinema and Society:
Thatcher's Britain
and
Mitterrand's France

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of society in British and French cinemas of the 1980s. In this comparative study, the choice of this particular decade was motivated by the coming to power of the Conservative Party in Britain and the Socialist Party in France. Since the two governments adopted 'extreme' policies increasing the strengths and weaknesses traditionally found in their film industries, British cinema struggled even harder while French cinema enjoyed a strong financial support from the state. A significant feature of these two national cinemas in relation to films about society was the predominance of the realist vein in Britain and the comedy genre in France. This generic discrepancy was highly influential in the way the two national cinemas referred to social issues in the 1980s and most scholars have argued that British cinema widely discussed the state of its society whereas, on the whole, French cinema avoided to do so. What this research hopefully demonstrates is that, despite different generic approaches, British and French cinemas equally contributed to depict their contemporary societies. To analyse how these two societies were represented on screen, three main areas are studied thematically: first people in power (public institutions and individuals), second the world of work, and third the family. After a brief summary of social issues in Britain and France in relation with the aforementioned themes, discussions of their filmic representations are based on the films themselves, the textual analysis of films taken as case studies and their critical reception. I will argue that in the 1980s, British cinema offered the overall image of a class-bound society where individuals — living side by side — were unable to escape their social fate. The paradox of this cinema made by a majority of left-wing filmmakers was that ultimately it favoured a rather traditional view of society. By contrast, my research shows that the idea of friendship and solidarity prevailed over economic and social hardship in French cinema. Although this depiction of society was largely consensual, it nevertheless opened the debate for social alternatives.

Conventions

All quotations from French texts have been translated. Titles from articles have been left in French so as to facilitate the location of original material. Film titles have been left in French since most of them have never been translated into English.

For a number of articles taken from daily and weekly French press, the page number is not given. This is because these articles (from which page numbers have been erased) come from the BIFI database (Bibliothèque du Film, 100 rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine, 75012 Paris) where they are easily accessible.

With the exception of *Looks and Smiles* (Ken Loach, 1981), all the films referred to in this work are in colour. However, some illustrations for French films are in black and white since the Pal/Secam system prevented me from capturing these images in colour.

As regards French films, box-office results come from *Ciné-passion, 7e art et industrie de 1945 à 2000* (Simsi 2000) which present the results both in yearly and alphabetical order.

Introduction

Despite Andrew Higson's (1995, 7) claim that 'a national cinema only takes on meaning in so far as it is caught up in a system of differences; British cinema is what it is by virtue of its difference from American or French cinema', to my knowledge no thorough academic research has been written so far comparing these two European cinemas, while British and French cinemas have frequently been individually put in parallel with American cinema.

This thesis compares the filmic representation of British and French societies in the 1980s. What motivated the choice of this particular decade was the arrival in power of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party in 1979 and of François Mitterrand's Socialist Party in 1981. Not only had these two governments adopted a drastically different social agenda at home but also poles apart policies towards their film industry. For French cinema, the 1980s was a significant decade, during which cinema was more than ever lavishly celebrated and financially helped. At the same time it faced a symbolic defeat from the mid-1980s onwards when American cinema became more popular at the French box-office than the indigenous cinema. However, French cinema remained one of the most flourishing cinemas within Europe and under the impulse of the Socialist government it played a pivotal role in the setting up of European film regulations. The paradox of British cinema in the 1980s was its so-called renaissance against an economic climate of adversity resulting from the avowed disinterest of the Conservative government for its national cinema. The arrival of private funding into the film industry represented one source of income while the most significant event was the creation of Channel Four and its involvement in film production. Even though these two national cinemas were not made under totalitarian regimes when people in power dictate their vision of society, there was nevertheless a link between the socio-political context and each national cinema. However, this link was far from a direct one. There were two main areas where governmental decisions could be felt in British and French films. The first one concerned the financial and legal influence of the state on the film industry, reflected

essentially in production, distribution and celebrations. The second area was more difficult to assess and dealt with the way social measures taken by the two governments were echoed in the films. In order to analyse what sort of society was projected through 1980s British and French cinemas, components such as the contemporary social background, the structure of the film industry, national generic traditions and the influence of certain filmmakers will be taken into account.

Right from the start, the thorny question of what is understood by the concept of national cinema looms over this dissertation as an important issue. Yet, my aim here is not to redefine national cinema in the light of French and British cinemas but to briefly recap the state of scholarly research in this area and to examine some of the most influential ideas about national cinema¹. Although national cinema is frequently associated with the idea of films produced within a certain nation state, it is intrinsically a hybrid product. Indeed, most national cinemas are involved in regional and trans-national productions and filmmakers and actors are not tied to work in their own nation. Besides, as suggested by Susan Hayward (1993a, 6), even when referring to a specific national cinema 'there is not just one cinema, but several' through the existence of mainstream and peripheral cinemas. Despite the complexity of establishing the 'national' of a cinema at the level of theoretical debate, for the sake of convenience one needs to agree on which axis will be favoured to analyse British and French cinemas in this dissertation. In order to do so, Andrew Higson's (1995, 4-5) four definitions of what can be understood by the term national cinema will be outlined first.

To start with, a national cinema is defined in relation to its film industry and as such cinema is understood as a commercial product. The second chapter of my thesis deals with this particular aspect since it was essentially this definition which supported the British government's attitude towards its film industry while the highly interventionist attitude of the French government also stressed the financial aspect of its cinema.

The second use of the term national cinema refers to the question of audience through exhibition and consumption. This aspect is briefly touched on in my second chapter (a more thorough study of the question would constitute another research project).

The third understanding of 'national cinema' deals with the cultural quality of some specific film movements and directors as a way of marketing internationally a national cinema. Under this classification are generally included films aiming at an art cinema audience while popular films remain excluded.

And last but not least since it is this axis that this thesis will largely privilege, national cinema is a medium representing its nation and its preoccupations. Although cinema is a work of fiction and therefore its reflection of the nation has to be considered through the filter of its aesthetic strategies and artistic value, Andrew Higson suggests that the following questions can be asked about national cinemas: 'Do they share a common style or world-view? Do they share common themes, motifs, or preoccupations? How do they project the national character? How do they dramatize the fantasies of national identity? Are they concerned with questions of nationhood? What role do they play in constructing the sense or the image of a nation?'. Since 'cinema and latterly television, as the pre-eminent mass entertainment media of the twentieth century, have functioned as propagators of the national image, both in reflecting widely held views and constructing, extending, interrogating and perpetuating dominant cultural myths' (Richards 1997, 25), the vision of society offered by a national cinema can be fruitfully used in combination with questions of aesthetics, genres, box-office results and press coverage.

Structure of the thesis

This dissertation aims to examine the way French and British cinemas depicted their societies in the 1980s by anchoring the two national cinemas in their political, economic, social and

cultural fabric. The duality of cinema as an industry and as an art form implies that the two sides of the same coin constituting a national cinema deserve to be studied. Following a first chapter focusing on a review of the literature and the methodology adopted, this thesis consists of a chapter (chapter two) on the film industry in 1980s France and Britain while the third, fourth and fifth chapters concentrate on the films themselves. It is clearly beyond the scope of this dissertation to analyse in depth the plethora of themes developed in the two cinemas over a period of ten years. Yet, it quickly appeared that the state and its institutions, the world of work and the place of the family constituted the most important themes of the British and French films anchored in their contemporary societies, while reflecting the preoccupations of the time on a socio-political level. I made the choice of including the question of ethnicity within each chapter rather than dedicating a whole chapter to this issue. This was for reasons of length but also more fundamentally because the issue touched all the other areas studied in the thesis. Each of these chapters opens with a brief summary of the social issues in Britain and France in relation with each theme. Central to the discussion in chapters three, four and five are the films themselves, the textual analysis of films taken as case studies and the critical reception surrounding the films' release.

Chapter one is an introductory chapter which contributes to sketch the methodology used in this dissertation while offering an overview of the material available at the time of writing. Since my position is not to 'reinvent the wheel' but to use previous writings as a springboard to my own research, a review of the literature is required in order to define the scope of this field of research.

In my second chapter, the decision to survey the film industry in each country has been motivated on the one hand by their influence on the films produced at a particular time (in terms of quantity, budget, financial help, policies...) and on the other hand by the drastically different attitude adopted by the British and French governments during that decade. The role

of this chapter is not only to map the economic and political framework of these two cinemas but also to understand how such a framework influenced the type of films produced in relation to budget, genre, distribution and audience.

In the third chapter, the representation of the state and its institutions in British and French cinemas is the first theme analysed since these areas are the fundamental structures on which the two societies are based. In French cinema, it appears that little was done on the representation of the Socialist government and that the few films referring to it were largely consensual. In sharp contrast, the state was more frequently represented in British cinema, usually stressing the coldness and anonymity of members of the government. As for the representation of institutions, some were given a more prominent position in one cinema than in the other — education in French cinema and health in British cinema for instance — hence reflecting some specific trends in the preoccupation of the filmmakers in each country.

The fourth and fifth chapters show especially the pertinence of the comparative component of this thesis, revealing how in 1980s cinema the theme of work was largely explored in British cinema, while the family was mainly analysed within French cinema. The unusual feature of the fourth chapter (on work) is that it goes against the grain of the general perception, in particular among scholars, that 1980s French cinema tends to ignore the question of work and the problem of unemployment. For instance, French scholar Michel Cadé (2000, 150) explains that the issue of growing unemployment in France remained absent from 1980s French cinema, as if French filmmakers waited until the early 1990s before tackling this subject. While this chapter corroborates the widely found notion that 1980s British cinema dealt significantly with the issue of work and unemployment, it also demonstrates that this theme was equally present in French cinema, though using the comedy genre instead of the realist tone adopted in British films. Similarly, the issue of the family was frequently explored in 1980s French cinema, with the accent put on a redefinition of the family unit. By way of

contrast, scholars have focused primarily on the representation of gender in British films while not tackling the issue of the family. Therefore, the novelty of the final chapter (on the family) is not only to demonstrate that the family is present in British films of the era but also to compare its representation with that of the French cinema.

As part of European cinema, 1980s British and French films were associated with the quality of *auteur* films and a prestigious film tradition. In that sense, the two national cinemas had a similar background in which a long industrial, cultural and generic tradition backed up their productions in the 1980s. But during this decade, British and French cinemas also represented two extremely contrasted examples within European cinema. Whether in terms of governmental policies about the film industry or generic specificity, Britain and France clearly stood apart. Yet, this research shows that on a thematic level the two cinemas are worth comparing since the comparison reveals how different discourses were used to refer to similar issues — issues that have been, in some cases, ignored so far by either British or French scholars. Before examining 1980s British and French cinemas in detail, this thesis opens with a chapter establishing how my work positions itself within academic research.

CHAPTER ONE:

British and French cinemas on screen:

Issues and methodology

This thesis analyses the way 1980s British and French societies were pictured in their national cinemas, with particular reference to state, work and family. Standing at the crossroad of multiple influences, cinema is by definition a problematic research area, being both a costly industry influenced by legal and economic structures and a work of art where the 'real world' is transformed by the filmmaker. In addition to the inherent difficulties related to the study of this medium, the complexity of my comparative project is increased by the following factors:

- This research offers new perspectives towards these two European cinemas but it also questions their own aesthetic specificities and respective evolutions during the decade. Thus, I am not only offering a comparison between two national cinemas at a given time. In order to be valid, this comparison needs to be correlated with the inherent qualities of British and French cinemas. This aspect is particularly important when one comes to issues of aesthetics and generic traditions.
- In this comparison involving around 1500 French films and 500 British ones, choices had to be made to offer a manageable selection of films which would also be as representative as possible of their era along the parameters of my project. Not only does this imply thematic and generic choices but also a decision to be inclusive of both popular and art cinemas.
- The decision to examine the complex link between film and society places my work within a long tradition. It nevertheless remains a complicated exercise which requires the choice of a clear methodological approach. This introductory chapter will discuss some of the most prominent methods adopted so far by scholars as well as the approach that this work will favour.

The representation of society offered by 1980s British and French films is not the sole interpretation of the filmmaker but the result of a sophisticated network of influences. What is relevant about films and their social contexts is the way filmmakers dealt (or not) with specific issues at the time of shooting. How do they decide to depict their contemporary

society? Which thematic and aesthetic axes do they favour? Which particular generic trends can be found in British and French cinemas? How does the film industry influence film budget and aesthetic? Although a number of recent publications has tended to stand against this trend, 'the writing of a national cinema has predominantly addressed moments of exception and not the 'global' picture' (Hayward 1993a, xi) by focusing either on the work of individual artists or particular film movements. As an attempt to offer a wider, if not 'global', picture of 1980s French and British cinemas, this dissertation focuses on a wide range of films and places them within their complex political, industrial, social and aesthetic frameworks. In the rest of this chapter I examine the relevant literature on the key areas pertaining to these issues in order to situate my own approach.

I - POLITICS AND THE FILM INDUSTRY

The influence of the British and the French governments on the existing structure of the film industry weighted heavily in the 1980s and had profound effects on their respective systems of subsidy, protection and regulation. One of the reasons for my comparative project is that the two governments adopted very different cultural policies with regards to the cinema. This first area of research is based on documents issued by the two governments, be they manifestoes, requested reports or white papers. Among the plethora of official documents recording the governmental attitude towards the film industry, some were more influential than others. Thus, in Britain, a first survey corresponding to the arrival of the Conservative Party in power in May 1979 was published under the title *Review of Policy on Film Finance* (Department of Trade 1979) in June 1979. This survey was followed in May 1983 by *A Report on the Supply of Films for Exhibition in Cinemas* (Department of Trade 1983) which mostly gave advice without interfering with the existing system. Issued in July 1984, the white paper entitled *Film Policy* (Department of Trade 1984) was the most influential

document of the decade. Its essential points were the abolition of the Eady levy (created in 1950) and the turning of the state-sponsored National Film Finance Corporation into the semi-privatised British Screen in 1985. The action of the government upon the film industry was analysed in *Sight and Sound* (Porter 1979, 221-66, Stanbrook 1984, 241-3 and Petley 1987, 86-90), while the experience of the state and Channel 4 was described in *Screen* (Ellis 1986, 6-22). Scholar Leonard Quart (1993, 15-34) discussed the impact of Thatcherite politics on 1980s British films and Julian Petley (1986a, 31-46) gave a chronological survey of the relationship between cinema and state from the beginning until the mid-1980s. In France, the official support of the arts in general and cinema in particular was already made clear in François Mitterrand's *110 propositions* (MacShane 1982, 259-72) during his 1981 campaign for presidency. Shortly after Jack Lang's nomination as Minister for Culture, the publication of the *Rapport de la mission de réflexion et de propositions sur le cinéma* (Bredin 1981), known as *Le Rapport Bredin*, in November 1981 established the guidelines on which Lang would position himself. This first report was followed by a second one on cinema and education in 1984 and a third one on privatised television in 1985. Published by the Minister for Culture, *Le Cinéma, La politique culturelle 1981-1991* (Ministère de la Culture 1991) provides an assessment of the evolution of French cinema under the Socialist Party in terms of audience, production and distribution while *Cinéma, Etat et culture* (Ministère de la Culture 1992) gives an historical overview of the relationship between cinema and state, focusing largely on the 1980s governmental policy. As for *Le Cinéma français face à son avenir* (Court 1988), it was one of the only surveys about French cinema made under right-wing Minister for Culture François Léotard during the cohabitation period. Highly involved with the legal and economic state of French cinema, the Socialist government came to realise fully the complexity of the cinema as an industry during a decade when French cinema finally lost its hegemony on its home market. The trade paper *Le Film français* published an

interview with François Mitterrand (1981, 6-7) shortly before his election in which the Socialist candidate developed his views for the future of French films and television, followed by Jack Lang's (Rival 1983, 3-4) assessment of the cinema reform. Then, Lang (1986, 5) explained in *Cinéma* how art and money should be the two pillars of French culture. The French government's intervention towards cinema and television have been discussed by both French and British scholars and film critics. Hence, French economist Joëlle Farchy (1999, 172-7) offered in *La Fin de l'exception culturelle?* a historical survey of state intervention towards cultural policies, underlining how the term culture became much more inclusive of popular art forms under Jack Lang. In *Sight and Sound*, Jill Forbes analysed 'The Bredin Report' (1982/83, 28-30) and the relationship between 'Television/France/Socialism' (1982, 103-5)² while Jayne Pilling (1984, 268-73) wrote about the Agency for Regional Cinema Development. And in *Screen*, Susan Hayward (1993b, 380-91) focused on cultural policy in her article 'State, culture and the cinema: Jack Lang's strategies for the French film industry 1981-1993' where she argued that despite the inroads made by American cinema on the French market during the 1980s, Jack Lang's measures gave a new impulse to the French film industry. In March 1986, *Les Cahiers du cinéma* (Le Roux and Toubiana 1986, 18-34) published a rather laudatory dossier encapsulating the measures taken under Jack Lang and their consequences upon French cinema.

Further to official documents, two sorts of sources can be identified: the publications of the industry itself and the literature commenting on the state of the industry. In Britain, from 1983 onwards the British Film Institute issued a *Film and Television Yearbook* which became more and more substantial throughout the 1980s despite the reputation the British film industry had for collecting insufficient data about production, exhibition and distribution³. To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the BFI, a report entitled *The BFI in the Eighties* (1983) presented the contribution of the BFI towards the film industry and set its five year plan (a plan which

suffered from the financial cuts decided by the 1984 *Film Policy*). Data were also made available in the *National Film Finance Corporation Annual Report* up to 1985, before being replaced by *British Screen Finance Annual Report and Accounts*. Another useful source of information was the trade paper *Screen International* which provided in particular weekly figures of box-office financial results and a yearly top twenty films on the British market.

By contrast with the relative paucity of information from the industry itself, the state of the British film industry was widely commented on by journalists and scholars alike during the 1980s (or shortly afterwards). The overall tendency was that, after the enthusiasm of the early 1980s fuelled by the Oscar successes of *Chariots of Fire* and *Gandhi*, a reappraisal of the film industry from the mid-1980s onwards projected doubts about its commercial viability without state financial support. The publication of Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street's *Cinema and State, The Film Industry and the British Government 1927-84* (1985) offered an extremely valuable piece of research which unfortunately only went as far as the mid-1980s. The pessimism of their last sentence which stated that 'Against these odds British film production may finally lose its protracted but tenacious struggle for survival' was significant, echoing a widespread idea in the 1980s. Hence, in *Learning to Dream: The New British Cinema* (1984, part one), film journalist James Park considered that the renaissance of British cinema was overpraised while in *British Cinema Now* (1985, 2) editors Martyn Auty and Nick Roddick were equally pessimistic in their questioning of a genuine renaissance at all. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's (1985, 147-58) provocative essay entitled 'But do we need it?' casts a gloomy shade over the role of British cinema in popular cultural life. In *Le Nouveau cinéma britannique 1979-1988* (1989) French scholar Philippe Pilard sketched a useful overview of 1980s British cinema in which the specific difficulties of the British film industry were played down as part of a larger phenomenon hitting European cinemas. Opening the 1990s with a rather dismal point of view, James Park's *British Cinema, The lights that failed* (1990) went one step further

by putting the blame not only on the industry but also on the lack of a national film-making tradition. Sharing a similar preoccupation towards the film industry, film scholar Duncan Petrie's *Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry* (Petrie 1991) and *New Questions of British Cinema* (Petrie ed. 1992) discussed the problems affecting the British film industry but also offered proposals to improve its current state. The following year, John Hill's article 'Government Policy and the British Film Industry 1979-90' in *European Journal of Communication* (1993, 203-24) demonstrated why the British film industry was unable to cope with the free market policy advocated by the government, a position further developed in 'British Film Policy' (Hill 1996a, 101-13).

Since the creation of the *Centre National de la Cinématographie* (CNC) in 1946, the French film industry has methodically collected figures about its own institutions which are made available by the *Centre National de la Cinématographie Informations* bulletin every two months (statistics, *avances sur recettes*, production costs). An extremely useful addition to it is the trade paper *Le Film français* which provides statistics and comments from the trade. The state of the French film industry has also generated a large amount of publications. *La Vingt-cinquième image, Une économie de l'audiovisuel* (1989) written by economist René Bonnell is a major contribution in which advice is provided in order to make financial help more useful to the film industry. The dichotomy between the generous subsidies received by the French film industry and its increasing difficulties were also analysed in the work of two other economists: Pierre-Jean Benghozi's *Le Cinéma: Entre l'art et l'argent* (1989) and Laurent Creton's *Le Cinéma et l'argent* (1999). Film historian and journalist Jean-Michel Frodon gave a useful global vision of both the industry and the films of the 1980s in France in *L'Age moderne du cinéma français* (1995, 431-817). Frodon offered a fairly pessimistic analysis, explaining that the economic crisis affecting French cinema after 1985 was not only due to internal problems but to external factors such as the hegemony of American cinema,

the new role of television and the arrival of videotapes. Joëlle Farchy analysed the harsher competition between cinema and television in the 1980s in *Le Cinéma déchaîné, Mutation d'une industrie* (1992). Another economist, Charles-Albert Michalet, discussed in his book *Le Drôle de drame du cinéma mondial, Une industrie culturelle menacée* (1987) the difficulty to fight over American hegemony, even in a country like France where the state amply helped the film industry financially. A number of British scholars have also offered views on the state of the French film industry. Hence, Jill Forbes in her book *The Cinema in France after the New Wave* (1992, 5-10) concluded that the end of the 1980s marked the end of an era for the French film industry. Susan Hayward's most sustained analysis 'A brief ecohistory of France's cinema industry 1895-1992' in her book *French National Cinema* (1993a, 18-67) discussed the more problematic position of the film industry by the end of the 1980s. In the light of this comparative study, the relative decline of French cinema during the 1980s, while viewed very pessimistically in France and Britain, nevertheless looks modest in comparison to the continuous struggle and far more severe problems of British cinema. The state of the industry, however central to my study, is but one aspect. Equally important is the issue of the representation of society in the films.

II - FILM AND SOCIETY

Although the aim of this work is certainly not to assess the verisimilitude of filmic representations as some kind of transparent 'window' on the world, films are nonetheless connected to the society in which they have been made. In the history of film theory, Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947) holds an important place for its social analysis of films during the Weimar years. This was followed by his *Theory of Film, The redemption of physical reality* (1960) in which Kracauer argues that films enable the recording and revelation of physical reality. But it was particularly in the 1970s that the study

of film and society was given a new impulse with Andrew Tudor's sociological analyses of films in *Theories of Film* (1974b) and *Images and Influence: Studies in the Sociology of Film* (1974a), while social historian Paul Monaco based his study on box-office successes in *Cinema and Society* (1976). The theoretical work of French scholar Pierre Sorlin in *Sociologie du cinéma* (1977) was also an important step, in its attempt to sketch a methodology to account for the various elements (social, cultural, aesthetic) which contribute to the reading of a film in connection with society. Films were not only analysed individually but in relation to other films dealing with similar social representations. His approach was quite unusual among French scholars who tended to focus either on the aesthetics of films or on the social context. As explained by Geneviève Sellier (Sellier and Burch 2001, 9-20), the relationship between film and its context is rarely dealt with by French scholars, especially when it concerns 'classics'. According to Sellier, what largely prevents French scholars from adopting such method is their reluctance to mingle various academic fields and their need for a cultural hierarchy in films. As regards the study of the relationship between specifically British and French cinemas and society, Raymond Durgnat's argument in *A Mirror for England* (1970, 1-11) was that films present a more or less distorted portrayal of their contemporary society in the way a mirror works. This position was also adopted by French scholar Annie Goldmann in *Cinéma et société moderne* (1971, 38) who considered that films 'are the link between a certain vision of the world and the characteristics of modern society' and later by sociologist Catherine Gaston-Mathé in *La société française au miroir de son cinéma* (1996). Similarly in *Société et cinéma: Les années 1960 en Grande-Bretagne, essai d'interprétation sociologique* (1979), Alain Malassiné studied the link between films and society, this time based on the Top Ten General Release in Britain, yet the role of the film industry is not mentioned. The idea that films offered a window onto reality since they could be considered as an 'imitation of life' was far too reductive, leading to an oversimplification of

the medium. Thus, a new methodological approach involving not only information about social, cultural and aesthetic components but also the role of the film industry was largely developed by Anglo-American scholars. During the 1990s, a number of works explored 1980s British and French cinemas through this perspective. On French cinema, major contributions were Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau's *French Film, Texts and contexts* (1990, 241-96), Jill Forbes's *The Cinema in France after the New Wave* (1992) and Susan Hayward's *French National Cinema* (1993a). On British cinema, one can refer to Lester Friedman's *British Cinema and Thatcherism* (1993), Sarah Street's *British National Cinema* (1997) and John Hill's *British Cinema in the 1980s* (1999a). These books share a common interest in, broadly speaking, two main areas: the context in which films were produced, followed by a study of the films through either textual analysis or a more historical approach. Hence these books are divided into a first part providing the political, social and industrial background and a second part focusing on a corpus of films. While these books include questions of genres, context and popular cinemas, Sarah Street favours a generic approach, Susan Hayward a chronological one and Lester Friedman an authorial one, John Hill chooses a thematic approach. It is this latter approach that my dissertation will adopt in this comparative study. The decision to adopt Hill's thematic approach was motivated by the comparative component which allowed less flexibility to my work. Pierre Sorlin's similar choice in his comparative book *European Cinemas, European Societies 1939-1990* (1991) also influenced my choice of a thematic classification since it allows a considerable number of films to be compared without risking a mere juxtaposition.

In my research, out of widespread viewing significant thematic axes stood out, through recurring patterns in the two cinemas. Among the overall 1980s production, it became obvious that a number of films repeatedly engaged with specific questions about their contemporary society. Given existing scholarship when I started this project, I expected that

certain themes present in one cinema would be absent from the other. Yet, it gradually became evident that the lack of scholarly analysis of particular issues in one national cinema was as telling as its discussion in the other cinema under study. To take a simple example, the family was frequently found in 1980s French cinema and has generated a large critical debate from film critics and scholars alike. Conversely, the first impression in 1980s British cinema was that the family was not at the heart of its thematic preoccupations because it has been largely ignored by film scholars. But the family does appear in British cinema of the 1980s and this dissertation will explore how it was represented. In the same way, the representation of work constituted one of the major themes of 1980s British cinema and as such has been carefully analysed, whereas it has been argued that issues of work and unemployment have been largely ignored in 1980s French cinema and therefore under-discussed. However, as I will show, this was not exactly the case. This is, to a large extent, because national specificities have encouraged the two national cinemas to adopt different genres and discourses. I thus now need to turn to questions of genre and aesthetics.

III - FILM GENRE AND AESTHETICS

The thematic axes found in 1980s British and French cinemas magnify certain aspects of their contemporary societies. But as an audio-visual work of art, a film also has its own filmic and narrative codes to interpret the surrounding world. This leads to the study of films on two levels: on the one hand a study of the pivotal role of generic traditions in British and French cinemas, and their impact on definitions of popular and art cinemas and, on the other hand, textual analysis applying to individual films considered as case-studies.

In relation to European cinemas, the terms 'popular' and 'art' cinemas frequently appear to be mutually exclusive. Until recently, the majority of scholarly publications tended to focus primarily on the work of *auteurs* when referring to British (Friedman 1993 and Street 1997)

or French (Frodon 1995, Prédal 1996, Austin 1996) cinemas, while popular films remained largely excluded from the canon of the 'official' national cinema. In that sense, the pioneering work of British scholars Andrew Higson (1995), Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau (1992) strongly contributed to the legitimisation of popular European cinema in Film Studies in the early 1990s. Recently, this focus on popular European cinemas has intensified with, for instance, Dimitris Eleftheriotis's *Popular Cinemas of Europe* (2001), Lucy Mazon's *France on Film: Reflections on popular French cinema* (2001) and the yearly publication of the *Journal of Popular British Cinema* from 1998 onwards. The decision to include in this thesis examples taken from both popular and art cinemas was directly dictated by my area of research and my thematic approach. Since the filmic representation of 1980s British and French societies is analysed, what could justify the choice of one type of cinema over the other? Because art and popular cinemas are both — in various ways — rooted in their contemporary society, they deserve to be analysed in relation to the social issues that they project. Popular cinema is difficult to define. Relating it purely to the taste of the audience, and as a corollary to box-office results, is too restrictive since the popularity of films is strongly linked with marketing strategies. Moreover, if we assessed British films only according to its box-office results, then very few of them would enter this category in the 1980s. It is also the case that, as suggested by Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau (1992, 8), art cinema is not made away from any commercial preoccupations and aesthetic requirements do exist in popular films. To take one example, how can we classify a French success such as Coline Serreau's *Trois hommes et un couffin*? Is it a popular comedy whose word-of-mouth box-office success was mainly due to its entertaining and easily accessible format? Or an *auteur* film sharing a similar aesthetic with Coline Serreau's previous films? As Brigitte Rollet (1998, 2) explains about Coline Serreau, 'her main attribute is to "confuse" the issue by making *auteur* films as well as commercial films'. In this comparative study, this

sense of confusion is even more apparent when dealing with questions of export. If one takes the example of French films distributed in Britain, chances are that a film belonging to popular cinema will be marketed as an art film and screened in an art-house cinema in Britain. This shift is often accentuated, as Victor Perkins (1992, 196) argues, by the presence of subtitles which make films less accessible to a general English-speaking audience. By dealing with popular British and French films, beyond the aim of inclusivity this work hopes to map out and explore an area which largely remains under-researched despite an ever-growing interest in these films. The re-discovery of some popular films of the period enables a reassessment of thematic and generic components which refer to their social representations. To take a significant example, the issue of unemployment is largely absent from what can be seen as the 'official' French cinema (that is to say *auteur* cinema), while this theme is developed in popular films.

Of particular interest in this research are the generic choices made by French and British directors in the 1980s to depict contemporary society. Despite the blurring of genres in the 1980s noted in British cinema (Hill 1999a, 136) and in French cinema (Jeancolas 1995, 95), in relation to the representation of contemporary society, comedies remained an influential genre in French films while realism dominated British cinema. On top of industrial constraints, the generic specificity of the two national cinemas corresponds to long-lasting traditions which continued to be influential in the 1980s. In British cinema, the influence of John Grierson's documentary tradition in the 1930s and the realist fiction which followed has remained strong. The socially responsible cinema in favour of an equal and moral society advocated by Grierson (Tudor 1974, 59-76) was connected to his interest in the 'common people'. Such an interest in working-class and social issues was also illustrated by the British New Wave in the late 1950s/early 1960s but, as noted by Peter Hutchings (2001, 146), this time the thematic focus was on the leisure activities of the working class instead of its work.

Thus, films such as *Look Back in Anger* (1959), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), *A Taste of Honey* (1961) and *A Kind of Loving* (1962) have now become classics of British cinema. A further impact of the socially responsible cinema started in the 1970s with the Marxist-inspired films of directors like Ken Loach. In the 1980s, the influence of realism over British cinema could be felt in the majority of films about contemporary Britain. During this decade, it was more and more difficult to draw a precise line between realist films both in the cinema and on television and, as Peter Stead explains (1989, 216), British cinema needed to position itself beyond the conventions of television to regain a substantial audience. Aesthetic changes during the 1980s correspond to what scholar Tom Ryall (1998, 19) calls 'a series of variations in fictional realism', that is to say that the social context of films and the influence of realism were mixed with other genres such as comedy (*Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, *Educating Rita*, *Gregory's Girl*), fantasy (*Vroom*, *The Good Father*) and the thriller (*Paris by Night*, *Defence of the Realm*). Indeed, realism has immensely influenced British cinema and Andrew Higson (1995, 178) equated it with 'the most impressive, valuable, and significant tradition in the history of British feature films'. It is therefore not surprising that, in addition to John Hill's *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-63* (1986), Peter Stead's *Film and the Working Class* (1989), Robert Murphy's *Realism and Tinsel, Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-1949* (1989), Marcia Landy's *British Genres, Cinema and Society 1930-1960* (1991, chapter 10) and the more recent *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Hallam and Marshment 2000) and *British Social Realism, From documentary to Brit Grit* (Lay 2002), most major scholarly contributions to British cinema include chapters on the documentary movement, the New Wave or British realism: in *British Cinema History* (Curran and Porter eds. 1983, 99-112, 272-93, 303-11), in *All Our Yesterdays, 90 years of British cinema* (Barr ed. 1986, 72-97), in *Waving the Flag* (Higson 1995, 176-271), in *Dissolving Views, Key writings on British cinema* (Higson ed. 1996, 38-50, 133-77) and in *British Cinema, Past and Present* (Ashby

and Higson eds. 2000, 221-32, 249-60). These numerous discussions about realism confirm that this genre occupies a special status within British cinema. In her chapter about social-problem films, kitchen sink dramas and Free Cinema in *British National Cinema*, Sarah Street (1997, 83) notes that in the 1960s most of the New Wave social-problem films did not make as much money as more popular genres like the *Carry On* series or the *James Bond* films. As the following chapter will show, this discrepancy between the cultural prestige of realism and the absence of social-realist films from the box-office was still valid in the 1980s.

In France, comedy has always been an extremely popular genre, confirmed by box-office results with *La Grande vadrouille* (1966), *Les Visiteurs* (1993), *Le Corniaud* (1965) and *Trois hommes et un couffin* (1985) among the five French best-sellers from 1956 to 1995 (Prédal 1996, 840). In the early 1980s, the renewal of French comedy came through the rise of the *café-théâtre*, in particular the *Spendid* and the *Café de la Gare* (for further development on the *café-théâtre*, see Merle 1995). Moving from adapting successful plays on screen (*Les Bronzés* (1978), *Les Bronzés font du ski* (1979), *Viens chez moi j'habite chez une copine* (1980), *Le Père Noël est une ordure* (1982)), actors belonging to the *café-théâtre* rapidly became famous in popular comedies (*Ma femme s'appelle reviens*, *Circulez y'a rien à voir*, *La Smala*, *Les Ripoux*). Their experience as comic actors was often followed by their own filmmaking (Michel Blanc (*Marche à l'ombre*), Gérard Jugnot (*Pinot simple flic*, *Scout toujours*), Josiane Balasko (*Sac de noeuds*, *Les Keufs*)) or their performance in *auteur* films (Coluche and Thierry Lhermitte in *La Femme de mon pote*, Michel Blanc in *Tenue de soirée* and *Monsieur Hire*, Josiane Balasko in *Trop belle pour toi*, Anémone in *Péril en la demeure*, Coluche in *Tchao Pantin*). In relation to my topic, the films influenced by the *café-théâtre* were crucial since they offered a satire of contemporary society, using catch-phrases, stereotypes and an exaggerated physicality. *Café-théâtre* actors and playwrights, in the wake of May 1968, denounced in particular the established bourgeois order. Despite the genre's

take on contemporary society, comedy has rarely been given the space that it deserves in scholarly work, and has not been considered a genre which offers the possibility of studying the social context of 1980s France. This can partly be explained by French scholars privileging *auteur* cinema while largely ignoring a popular genre such as comedy, especially French comedy. Another reason, explaining the limited interest among British scholars, is the lack of distribution of French comedies in Britain. However, the interest in popular European cinema among British scholars in the 1990s led gradually to the study of some French comedies. Thus, chapters on comedy are included in Jill Forbes's *The Cinema in France after the New Wave* (1992, 171-99), Ginette Vincendeau's *The Companion to French Cinema* (1996, 56-7), Phil Powrie's *French Cinema in the 1980s* (1997, 141-70), Brigitte Rollet's *Coline Serreau* (1998, 99-123) and Carrie Tarr with Brigitte Rollet's *Cinema and the Second Sex, Women's filmmaking in France in the 1980s and 1990s* (2001, 165-95). By contrast, French scholars tended to ignore French comedies, with the exception of Michèle Lagny (1997, 119-31), René Prédal (1993, 48-56) and Claude Beylie (1997, 123-31). And therefore, writing on French comedies has been left to journalists and film critics: Pierre Tchernia's *80 grands succès du cinéma comique français* (1988), Stéphane Brisset's *Le Cinéma des années 80* (1990, 137-48), Jacques Siclier's *Le Cinéma français, de Baisers volés aux Nuits fauves 1968-1993* (1993, 231-43), Jean-Michel Frodon's *L'Age moderne du cinéma français, De la Nouvelle Vague à nos jours* (1995, 456-63) and Françoise Audé's *Cinéma d'elles 1981-2001* (2002, 65-79).

In the 1980s, the choice of realism in British cinema and comedy in French cinema significantly affected the perception of the representation of society. The term realism suggests a set of aesthetic principles as well as thematic influences. A similar iconography is understood by this term and, as stated by Geoff Brown (1997, 189), 'Think British realism , and you think inevitably of kitchen sinks, factory chimneys, cobblestones, railway arches,

bleak stretches of moor or beach, graffiti-lined council estates, people and landscapes placed in spare and striking juxtaposition'. In fact, location shooting in the Midlands and the North of England is crucial since the *mise en scène* highlights the relationship between place, character and identity (Higson 1984, 3). As a genre associated with a 'socially committed' cinema (Hill 1986, 128), realism put the emphasis on ordinary people, a social group which has traditionally been marginalized from British mainstream cinema. Another important component of realism is that, even if the protagonists are not necessarily seen at work, it is their relationship with work which defines them. Thus, the theme of work, largely explored in 1980s British cinema, can be traced as far as the documentary movement. The focus on economically marginalized communities found in 1980s British films depicting contemporary society was equally influenced by the rise of unemployment and social poverty in Britain and by the realist genre which favoured this particular social group. In French cinema, comedy has traditionally been a rich vein to study society (Forbes 1992, 171) and the 1980s were largely associated with the social satire of the *café-théâtre* comedies. Comedy is based on the disruption of convention and reversing expectations (Rollet 1998, 99), which contribute to the exploration of new possibilities in society. Yet, as underlined by Carrie Tarr and Brigitte Rollet (2001, 165), the ambiguity of the comedy genre is created by the contrast between the disruptive narrative element and the happy ending. Thus, while disruptions open up a space for addressing social and political concerns, the happy ending marks a return to a more conventional order. It therefore appears that comedy is a genre which contributes to giving a representation of 1980s French society on screen as, on the one hand progressive in exploring new social patterns and, on the other end in favour of a conventional world.

CHAPTER TWO:

The Film Industry in Britain and France

in the 1980s

INTRODUCTION

The 1980s can be considered a major decade for the British and French film industries, since the influence of what can be seen as 'extreme' policies in the two countries magnified the strengths and weaknesses traditionally found in their industries. In Britain, the common argument was that the policy of the Conservative Party aimed to 'destroy' the film industry. The governmental decision to abolish the Eady levy, the National Film Finance Corporation and the quota system all supported this point of view. Although the forecast death of British cinema following the white paper *Film Policy* of 1984 did not take place, the film industry remained nevertheless in a weak position. Even if audiences gradually increased from 1985 onwards and film production remained steady between 1984 and 1988, the fall in production of 1989, back to the level of 1981, demonstrated the vulnerability of the British film industry. However, the creation of Channel Four and its huge contribution to film production, the input of British Screen, the arrival of screen multiplexes and the common effort of the film industry to organise a 'British Film Year' in 1985 were key factors in the survival of the industry. This outline suggests that the adverse climate created by the Conservative government may have prompted the industry to become more innovative and resourceful by relying on its own strength and on market forces.

By contrast, French cinema was lavishly helped by the government whose financial contribution nearly amounted to one per cent of overall state spending. Expanding on the action of earlier post-war regimes, the Socialist government had in mind that regaining a popular audience was essential for the revival of cinema and that the film industry required public help. And yet, despite the efforts by the government to promote its cinema, audiences decreased after 1985 together with film production. This 'schizophrenic' situation underlined, among others, by Ginette Vincendeau (1996, 9) was the result of a public policy which had some unpredictable effects on the industry. Measures meant to support French cinema were in

some cases putting at risk the fragile equilibrium existing in the film industry. In particular, the creation of a tax shelter together with the arrival of Canal+ drastically increased the average cost of film production resulting in a decline in the number of films produced. It is also the case that early 1980s figures, like 1970s figures (after 1974), were artificially inflated by the boom in porn films, which subsided with the arrival of video and Canal+. The double-edged position of the relationship between the government and the French film industry was that, while some state interventions were not entirely beneficial to the industry, the level of government support (unparalleled in Europe) certainly limited the decline common to all European film industries in the 1980s — in particular in the struggle against the Hollywood hegemony.

If we turn to French and British films of the 1980s, a significant discrepancy exists in the type of films dealing with society in the two countries. Whereas on the whole France produced a great diversity of medium-budget genre films (especially comedies), Britain made mostly small-budget social-realist films. Even if there is a genuine tradition behind these two genres, as briefly discussed in chapter one, the aim of this chapter is to discover to what extent governmental decisions and existing structures influenced this discrepancy between the two national productions. This chapter will try and understand why the majority of British films focusing on contemporary society were financially supported by the BFI Production Board, the NFFC/British Screen and Channel Four whereas big-budget films in genres such as heritage and adventure films were waving the British flag with private (often American) money. In terms of distribution, the question is why the small-budget 'realist' films did not benefit from a respectable exposure nationwide. As for French cinema, what is significant in this comparative study is the variety of genres dealing with the social world, from mainstream comedies to *auteur* films and crime films. At the same time, most of these films had medium-sized budgets and enjoyed wide distribution and respectable box-office results.

Although the consequences of state decisions for the film industry cannot be estimated with precision, it is nevertheless a factor that requires to be taken into account as a powerful influence. For that reason, this chapter will examine the role of the state in France and Britain in order to assess governmental influence, in terms of financial and aesthetic choices. To issues of production will be added the contribution of television, questions of distribution and exhibition and the specificities of film culture in the two countries.

I - FILM PRODUCTION IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE 1980s

1 - State intervention

The Conservative Party in Britain and the Socialist Party in France adopted extremely clear-cut positions towards the film industry when they came into power. Although it was expected that the Labour government (1974-79) would head towards a more supportive attitude for the film industry (Dickinson and Street 1985, 244-6), the return of the Conservative Party in 1979 nipped these hopes in the bud. The free-market economy advocated by Margaret Thatcher's government was applied to British cinema, which was considered first of all as an industry. By way of contrast, the Socialist Party expressed its strong will to support the film industry since it was seen as an expensive art form which required state support. As a result, the Ministry of Culture adopted a highly interventionist attitude towards French cinema. The attitude of the two governments towards the film industry came as no surprise since their intentions were already established in their electoral manifestos.

Among François Mitterrand's *101 propositions* (MacShane 1982, 259-72) which constituted his electoral manifesto for the 1981 elections, number 94 focused on television and radio which would be 'decentralized and pluralist' while number 98 stated that 'outside of France, the active and growing presence of French culture will be encouraged [and] the teaching of art in schools will be developed'. Number 99 was even more specific in its assertion that

'support of the creative arts — cinematography, music, theatre, plastic arts and architecture — will place cultural renaissance in France as one of the first major Socialist ambitions. An international council for science and culture, a European film school and an international music centre will be created'⁴.

By contrast, the Conservative Manifesto of 1979 remained extremely vague concerning its policy towards the Arts by simply stating:

'We will continue to give as generous support to Britain's cultural and artistic life as the country can afford'.

The ambiguity of the above statement echoed the lack of enthusiasm of the Conservative Party towards an industry which, in their views, should be able to finance itself rather than being state-supported. Throughout the 1980s, the attitude of the Conservative government triggered harsh comments and pessimism from the film trade and film critics alike. For instance, scholar Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1985, 148) wrote that 'The death of traditional cinema (highly likely) and its transformation into a new techni-culture (speculative) is seen by the Government as a natural development which should not be hindered by state interference'. In France, the involvement of the Socialist Party in various areas of the film industry, ranging from legislation to financial support, encountered some criticism both at home and abroad because 'culture has run very close to being nationalised' (Hayward 1993b, 381) implying that 'art has become a client of the state and as such has lost its contestatory edge' (Hayward 1993b, 390).

This section will first establish which legal and financial measures were adopted by the state in the two countries. Then, bearing in mind that in this private industry helped by public funding there were no straightforward links between the official measures and the films produced, the influence of state decisions on the films made during that decade will be examined.

1.1 - The existing structure: the Eady levy and the *compte de soutien*

In the years following the Second World War, there was considerable pressure on the two governments to secure their film industries against the flood of American films released on the French and British markets. In 1946, the French film industry created the *Centre National de la Cinématographie* (CNC) which introduced more prominent state intervention⁵. As part of this, in 1948, the *compte de soutien* was set up. A compulsory tax on the French box-office (around 12% of a ticket price), this levy redistributed its fund in two forms: the *soutien automatique* (set up in 1948) and the *avance sur recettes* (also called *aides sélectives*, introduced in 1959 by André Malraux, the then Minister for Culture). According to economist René Bonnell (1996, 528), the *soutien automatique* 'has been historically successful, has stimulated national production and fought back American competition'. As for the *avance sur recettes*, on which I will comment later, it consisted of an interest-free loan only repayable if the film made profit.

In Britain, the Attlee government was in favour of providing financial support for the creation of 'quality films'. With Harold Wilson — one of the very few political figures to take a major interest in the film industry (Petley 1986a, 36) — at the Board of Trade, the British film industry benefited from governmental help and the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) was set up in 1949. Based on existing examples in France and Italy, the Eady levy (named after Sir Wilfred Eady, the then Second Secretary at the Treasury) was introduced on a voluntary basis in 1950, until it was made compulsory by the 1957 Cinematograph Act. The levy consisted of redistributing part of the ticket price into the film industry while a small proportion of the money was kept for the British Film Institute Film Fund (later the BFI Production Board), the National Film School and the Children's Film Foundation. However, the idea behind the NFFC was only to provide a limited financial contribution towards a film budget because, unlike broadcasting and the arts in general, 'film was still regarded as

primarily a commercial undertaking' (Petrie 1991, 56). Unlike the *compte de soutien* whose aim was also to support a selection of 'quality' (or *auteur*) films thanks to the *avance sur recettes*, the Eady levy did not take into account the quality of the film as money was only given back in proportion to box-office result. A direct consequence was that it encouraged American companies to produce films in Britain in order to benefit from it and 'the industrial logic produced a cultural absurdity' (Caughie with Rockett 1996, 5). In fact, the only institutional body which recognised the cultural aspect of films was the BFI Experimental Film Fund, though its budget was rather meagre.

1.2 - Structural changes in the 1980s

After the arrival of the Socialist Party in power, the French film industry quickly came into the limelight thanks to Jack Lang, a charismatic and extremely popular Minister for Culture appointed from 1981 to 1986 and from 1988 to 1993 (in between, the 'cohabitation' government appointed François Léotard who did not significantly modify Lang's projects), who was able to pursue his reform of the film industry with the almost constant support of President François Mitterrand. Founder and former president of the Nancy festival before he was director of the Chaillot theatre in Paris, Lang had an intimate knowledge of the artistic world and his presence changed the status of the Ministry of Culture (Frodon 1995, 560). In order to establish a coherent policy concerning the film industry, Jack Lang asked for a report on the state and future of French cinema under the chairmanship of Jean-Denis Bredin. This report (Bredin 1981) was published in November 1981 and presented to the film trade by Jack Lang in April 1982 in the form of 16 *fiches* (this report would be followed by a second one in 1984 on education and cinema and a third one in 1985 on privatised television). By covering the three main areas of production, distribution and exhibition, and television as well as film school, conservation and archive, the Bredin report demonstrated an attempt to take into

account every aspect of the film industry while instructing the *commission des avances sur recettes* to subsidise 'cultural' rather than 'commercial' projects. This report (Bredin 1981, 5) identified three main threats for the future of French cinema: American cinema, television and new technologies (video, cable and satellite television). Qualified by British scholars as 'remarkable for the unified vision of its guiding proposals' (Hayward 1993b, 382) and 'brilliantly imaginative' (Forbes 1982/83, 30), this report indicated a desire for clarification and organisation. Optimistic in its belief that a larger audience could be regained in smaller towns (*fiche* 12) as part of a more general policy of decentralisation, the report refused the thirst for productivity of the previous government in favour of a more human approach to French cinema as a social phenomenon.

In Britain, the Board of Trade published a *Review of Policy on Film Finance* (Department of Trade 1979), a 'minor' report whose role was to assess the position of the new government towards the film industry. This report, made of 46 points, underlined the observation that 'the difficulties of the independent producer in Britain are compounded by the 'duopoly' of the EMI and Rank organisation' (point 22) and that the Eady levy money 'would be more effective in supporting British films if it were made available for allocation selectively by an NFFC-type body' (point 33). Even if the position of the government was already made clear in this report, it was the publication of a white paper on *Film Policy* (Department of Trade 1984) during the Conservative Party's second term of office which marked a step forward towards market deregulation. With a statement such as:

'We do not believe that statutory recycling mechanisms are an efficient way of encouraging an economic activity that should essentially be oriented towards the market — a market, moreover, that is now expanding through new outlets and producing excellent results.' (5.9)

Film Policy marked a turning point in the history of British cinema by abolishing a number of existing regulations in favour of a more independent industry.

Since its introduction in 1950, the Eady levy had been largely criticised because the redistribution of part of the ticket price was made according to box-office results, a way of attributing the most financial help to the films which needed it less. Another area which became problematic in the 1980s as a result of the decline in attendances was the exhibition sector's view that it contributed too heavily to this levy in comparison with the distribution and production sectors. This argument supported the decision of the government to abolish the levy by stating that:

'We are convinced that the existing Eady levy is an unreasonable burden on the cinema exhibition industry, and have decided that it should be removed completely.' (5.11)

As a consequence, the Eady levy was abolished and the NFFC became British Screen whose financial support would mostly come from the private sector. In order to justify these measures, the Conservative government explained that:

'We believe that Britain has already a film industry of which it can be justly proud, and that there is potential for more growth, and for yet greater achievements. But these achievements cannot be attained with all the paraphernalia of Government intervention and an intrusive regulatory framework dating from the era of silent films. They are policies of freedom and challenge.

We are sure that the challenge will be successfully taken up.' (11.1)

Although the inherent values of the *Film Policy* White Paper were in accordance with the government's position so far, it was a major blow to the film industry which came to fully realise that 'the withdrawal of state support will leave the industry exposed to market forces almost as much as it was sixty years ago' (Dickinson and Street 1985, 248).

1.3 - New modes of finance in Britain and France

One way of encouraging private investments in a high risk-taking enterprise like the film industry is to make it attractive by decreasing public taxes in that field. This strategy was used through Capital Allowances by the Conservative Party in 1979 and through the SOFICAs by the Socialist Party from the mid-1980s. The introduction of Capital Allowances to the film industry, recommended by the Department of Trade (1979, point 44), did stimulate British film production and contributed to the film renaissance in the early 1980s. The City as well as pension funds started to consider the film industry as a lucrative investment since tax relief could be claimed, and they participated in films such as *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) (initially funded by the National Union of Mineworkers' Pension Fund before foreign financiers took an interest in the project), *Educating Rita* (Lewis Gilbert, 1983) and *Local Hero* (Bill Forsyth, 1983). The governmental decision to phase out Capital Allowances between 1984 and 1986 (*Film Policy* 1984, point 3.7) proved to be disastrous to the British film industry even if 'it is difficult to assess how much of the negative reaction their phasing-out caused' (Petrie 1991, 60).

A similar tax-shelter system, the *Sociétés pour le Financement du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel* (SOFICA), was set up in France in 1985 to encourage the private sector to invest in films. Large investments were made, but the new investors had no knowledge of the film industry. They were 'tempted by a safe investment which would require the presence of stars or famous directors' (Bonnell 1985, 3), thus increasing the average film budget, and limiting the number of films made per year. In 1983 Jack Lang also introduced another measure to encourage private investment in the industry with the creation of the *Institut pour le Financement du Cinéma et des Industries Culturelles* (IFCIC), an institute which guaranteed that production loans were backed up by the state.

2 - Subsidies

The following grid highlights the difficulty in comparing French and British cinemas because of the overwhelming gap existing in the financial help and the number of films made (how can one compare, for instance, the 1981 production of 189 French films with 38 British ones?). In fact, in the 1980s the number of French films given the *avance sur recettes* was almost equivalent to the whole British production.

	France				Britain			
Year	Total number of films	<i>Soutien automatique</i> in million F.Francis	<i>Avance sur recettes</i>		Total number of films	NFFC/British Screen		BFI
			Number of films	Sum allocated in million F.Francis		Number of films	Sum allocated	Sum allocated and number of films
1980	189	125.5	35	25.9	38	17	£1.5 million per year	£1 million per year for 2 or 3 films a year
1981	231	175	27	27.6	24			
1982	164	164.8	49	71.9	51			
1983	131	169.4	42	51	42			
1984	161	189.2	42	54	53			
1985	151	186.7	55	87.6	55			
1986	134	162.9	52	75	39	44	£1.5 million per year plus loans from Channel Four, Cannon and Rank	
1987	133	157.8	45	65.9	51			
1988	137	182	58	93.4	56			
1989	136	242	45	98.1	38			

(During the 1980s the average conversion rate was £1 = 10FF)

In the 1980s there was an impressive increase in state funding in France. The fund allocated to the *avance sur recettes* was more than doubled, from FF27.7 million in 1981 to FF71.9 in 1982. The *avance* helped on average one film out of three during that decade. From 1982 onwards, the government actively participated in the budget of the *avance* by contributing half of its funding.

In Britain, the film industry received help from the state through the NFFC/British Screen and the BFI⁶. In the early 1980s the BFI Production Board played an important role in film production with a film-making budget of £1 million. Consequently, in 1985, it was agreed

that the BFI Production Board would be financially helped by the government for a limited period while the NFFC was dismantled and replaced by British Screen. In order to encourage private investments in British Screen, the government provided the company with £7.5 million over a period of 5 years and Channel 4, Rank and Cannon also invested money at the beginning. Even if British Screen was the main source of production outside television, it did not manage to become a profit-making enterprise and the original governmental plan to set the company free by the end of the 1980s had to be revised. This failure proved that the film industry was not like any other industry, in particular because of the dual status of British Screen as a body encouraging indigenous production and new British filmmakers on the one hand and as a commercial enterprise on the other hand (Hill 1996a, 104).

2.1 - What films were produced?

One may wonder if there was a particular type of films made with state money both in terms of aesthetics and budget. What films were selected by the *avance sur recettes*? By the NFFC and British Screen? On what criteria? Who was in charge of these institutions and what were their policies?

In Britain the NFFC/British Screen and the BFI were the two main film institutions (partly) funded by public money in the 1980s. The bulk of films financially helped by these institutions were highly influenced by the realist tradition, anchored in contemporary Britain and were made on a small budget. As far as the budget of these films was concerned, the restricted subsidies allocated to the NFFC/British Screen and the BFI largely explained the production of small-budget films. The lack of money influenced the content of the scripts and, as Peter Sainsbury explained: 'People are becoming more aware I think that there are certain things which on our budgets we simply can't do, and they are styling their scripts around that requirement' (Hodges 1980, 5). Yet, this does not entirely justify the generic decisions and the

thematic choice of films rooted in contemporary Britain. Under the Labour government, Mamoun Hassan was appointed head of the NFFC in January 1979 and remained in office after the general elections. The fact that for the first time this position at the NFFC went to a filmmaker (his predecessors were an accountant, a banker and a lawyer) shows that 'the proposals for restructuring the NFFC with a cultural role [...] are inextricably bound up with the institutional debris of a failed industrial policy' (Porter 1979, 266). Mamoun Hassan's more culturally oriented policy was in favour of an indigenous production removed from American or European influence. Although Hassan believed that it was not the role of the NFFC to favour a certain genre, he nevertheless claimed that 'the richest seam in British cinema has always been the poetic realist' (Houston 1979, 73). And if one looks at films financed by the NFFC (Appendix one), it is obvious that most of them were influenced by the tradition of social realism and were grounded in contemporary British society. The orientation started by Mamoun Hassan (with films such as *Babylon*, *Gregory's Girl* and *Britannia Hospital*) continued after the replacement of the NFFC by British Screen, even though the latter benefited from an increased budget and therefore the new institution was capable of supporting a larger number of projects. With Simon Relph — an experienced independent producer — as its Chief Executive, British Screen was headed by an expert in the film-making process. British Screen was also more commercially oriented, even if its prime criterion was to support quality films. The bulk of films produced by British Screen was low-budget (up to £2 million per film), one-third were medium-budget (between £2 and £5 million), while only a handful were big-budget (over £5 million). Although its contribution to British cinema was more diversified than that of the NFFC, British Screen equally supported small-budget social films dealing with the representation of contemporary Britain, such as *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987), *The Nature of the Beast* (1988), *High Hopes* (1988) and *Vroom* (1988).

Similarly, Colin McCabe at the BFI expressed his enthusiasm for scripts 'which capture some aspect of contemporary social experience' (Petrie 1991, 98). Thus, the relatively important production of small-budget realist films dealing with contemporary Britain was not only the result of a strong generic tradition but also the consequence of a limited budget and the affirmed desire of people at the head of the two public-funded institutions to encourage this particular kind of cinema. As the section on Channel Four will demonstrate, a similar policy was found within the new channel, thus contributing to develop this trend further.

In France, the *commission des avances* (in charge of selecting projects) was headed by a different member of the film trade every year and approved by professionals, be they actors (Isabelle Adjani, Pierre Arditi, Bulle Ogier), directors (André Téchiné, Etienne Chatilliez, Catherine Breillat, Luc Besson) or journalists (Serge Toubiana, Françoise Giroud). In 1985 and 1986 the appointment of Christian Bourgois, director of the Bourgois and 10/18 publishing companies⁷ as the president of the commission fitted with the Socialist image of the modern and educated businessman (similar to public image of producer Marin Karmitz). In 1989 the *commission des avances* was split into two: one committee examined projects concerning a first or a second film and attributed the *avance* to 20 films and another committee dealt with established filmmakers and awarded the *avance* to 30 films. One compulsory criterion to benefit from the *avance* was to shoot in French. Because of the non-commercial focus of the commission, it was frequently claimed that 'it would be less hypocritical to transform this *avance* into a mere subvention, which in practice would not make much difference' (Bonnell 1996, 532). In addition to the help provided to *auteur* cinema by the *commission des avances*, Jack Lang introduced the *aides directes* in order to promote French and foreign films by established filmmakers such as Wajda for *Danton* (1982), Bresson for *L'Argent* (1983) and Loach for *Fatherland* (1986). This direct funding, comparable to a 'state patronage' (Sauvaget 1999, 66), was set up to help established French

directors whose project had not been selected by the *commission des avances* or foreign directors, as a testimony of 'French support towards art and literature to authors who have been neglected in their own countries or where cinema is not valued to the same extent' (Frodon 1995, 565). It has been argued however that the generosity of the *aides directes* also hid a desire for France to be recognised internationally for its input towards European cinema and its attitude towards the democratisation of culture (Farchy 1999, 172-9).

The *commission des avances* revealed a great stability in the way it selected a substantial number of directors who received the award. The *avance* helped a great diversity of films in terms of budget, genre and aesthetics (for the complete list of films which benefited from it, see Appendix two). However, for the sake of clarity, this section will establish three main categories which were found throughout the decade: established *auteur* films, films by promising directors and films dealing with the representation of ethnic communities. The first category was well illustrated in the 1980s in the way the *avance* regularly supported certain *auteurs*: three times for Bertrand Tavernier, Jacques Rivette, Raoul Ruiz, Maurice Pialat and Alain Resnais, twice for André Téchiné, Agnès Varda, Jacques Doillon, Claude Miller and Claude Berri. Within this category, films dealing with the representation of contemporary France were usually medium-budget ones such as Catherine Breillat's *36 Fillette* (1987), John Berry's *Le Voyage à Paimpol* (1985), Jean-Charles Tacchella's *Escalier C* (1984) and Maurice Pialat's *A nos amours* (1983). Despite the common acknowledgment that, overall, the *avance* was an extremely positive system, the idea that it was not always a fair system and tended to help some directors more than others remained.

In the second category, which supported promising directors, the *avance* did quite well in the 1980s with some surprising box-office successes. For instance, in 1985 it supported Coline Serreau's *Trois hommes et un couffin* (5.2 million spectators) and in 1987 Etienne Chatilliez's *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (4 million spectators). Among the promising directors, the

avance steadily supported a new trend identified as the *cinéma du look* by providing financial help to Leos Carax for *Boy meets girl* (1983), *Mauvais sang* (1986) and *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (the *avance* was given in 1988 but the film only came out in 1991), Luc Besson for *Le Dernier combat* (1983) and *Subway* (1985) and Jean-Jacques Bénéix for *37°2 le matin* (1985). In relation to this research, the third category concerning the ethnic minorities proves to be most interesting for its novelty and for the parallel that can be drawn with British cinema. The following section will focus more specifically on this particular aspect of the two national cinemas.

2.2 - Giving a voice to ethnic minorities

1981 was the year of violent confrontations between groups of predominantly ethnic youths and the police both in France (in Venissieux, a suburb of Lyons) and in Britain (in the Brixton area of London). It was followed in Britain by widespread outbreaks of urban unrest in the Southall area of London and the Toxteth area of Liverpool. The scale of the riots made it impossible for the British government to ignore them and a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Scarman in order to understand precisely what occurred during these three days and to make recommendations to prevent the spread of further violence. Thus, the report entitled *The Brixton Disorders, 10-12 April 1981* (Scarman 1981), known as the Scarman report, not only questioned cultural factors and poor level of achievement at school but also mentioned that 'the limited opportunities of airing their grievances at national level in British society encourage them to protest on the street' (Scarman 1981, 2.37). In what Karen Ross (1996, 34) considers as 'the cynical if timely response to a government eager to provide a sop to an angry and restless black populace', the Workshop Declaration was drawn up in 1981. It consisted of an industrial agreement signed for an initial term of five years in which the Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians union, the BFI, Channel

Four and councils such as the Greater London Council would finance these workshops. According to Coco Fusco (1995, 307), there was no doubt that Black British workshops were the institutional responses to uprisings by making funding available to ethnic filmmakers. Community art was also greatly helped by the radical Labour policy of the Greater London Council whose programme of equal opportunities and positive discrimination was in favour of ethnic minorities (another factor which will be developed in the next section was the creation of Channel Four). Following a political rather than a commercial ethos, the much-discussed 'cinema of duty' (see for instance Malik 1996, 202-15, Fusco 1995, 312) coming out of these workshops explored the experience of being black in Britain, mostly through new film languages and experimental techniques⁸. Unsuccessful in commercial terms apart from exceptions such as Isaac Julien and Horace Ove⁹, with the diminishing of subsidies Black British cinema largely failed to develop in the 1990s (Alexander 2000, 113). By positioning itself too far on the margin and ignoring the importance of a potential audience, Black British cinema did not make it into the following decade and became largely forgotten. Based more solidly on the recognition of individual artists and incorporation into mainstream cinema, the representation of the Asian community by scriptwriter Hanif Kureishi and female filmmaker Gurinder Chadha paved the way for 1990s popular successes such as *Bhaji on the Beach*, *Bend It Like Beckham* and *My Son the Fanatic*. It therefore appears that, unlike Black British cinema that was 'ghettoised', the Asian community became more visible on screen.

Although such a nationwide cultural policy towards ethnic minorities did not happen in 1980s France, there are reasons to believe that positive discrimination in favour of *beur* cinema was encouraged by the state. It is true that in France, as Carrie Tarr (1993, 321) explained, filmmakers from ethnic minorities were required like indigenous counterparts to present a project with the potential of either commercial appeal or *auteur* film quality to be subsidized by state institutions such as the committee for the *avance sur recettes*. Yet, it appears that in

the 1980s a number of directors from North African origins benefited from the *avance sur recettes*: Mahmoud Zemmouri for *Prends 10000 balles et casse-toi* (1980), Abdelkrim Bahloul for *Le Thé à la menthe* (1984), Medhi Charef for *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (1985) and *No Woman's Land* (1986), Rachid Bouchareb for *Baton Rouge* (1985), Nacer Khemir for *Les Baliseurs du désert* (1985) and Merzak Allouache for *Un amour à Paris* (1986). Moreover, films made by Caucasian directors referring to interracial relationships between white and *beur* youths in the *banlieue* were also supported by the *avance*, such as *Interdit aux moins de 13 ans* (Jean-Louis Bertuccelli, 1982), *Laisse Béton* (Serge Le Peron, 1983) and *Pierre et Djemila* (Gérard Blain, 1986). Although it is impossible to assert that official instructions were given to the committee of the *avance sur recettes*¹⁰ to help *beur* cinema, in 1983 the Secretary of State in charge of immigration François Autain (Bosséno 1983, 45) explained that together with Jack Lang they would contribute as much as they could to encourage the creative wealth represented by the culture of the immigrant population¹¹. Although, as scholar Will Higbee (2001) explains, most *beur* filmmakers who made their debut feature in the 1980s found it hard to secure funding in the 1990s, the situation of *beur* filmmakers was more positive than that of black British filmmakers. As an example of multiculturalism versus integration, it appears that Black British cinema remained on the margin as a cinema with a strong identity whereas *beur* cinema continued to exist in the 1990s while being more and more associated with *jeune cinéma*. In fact, several *beur* filmmakers from the 1980s such as Medhi Charef, Rachid Bouchareb and Merzak Allouache have continued to make films¹² and more *beur* filmmakers made their debut in the 1990s: Karim Dridi, Ahmed Bouchaala and Malik Chibane. But what is much more significant is the way French scholars and critics have integrated *beur* filmmakers and actors as part of the *jeune cinéma*. Thus, film critic Claude-Marie Trémois (1997, 81-96) and scholar Jean-Pierre Garnier (2001, 79) refer to Medhi Charef and a reference book on *jeune cinéma* edited by

scholar Michel Marie (1998) includes Malik Chibane, Karim Dridi and *beur* actor Roschdy Zem. Whereas in Britain the Black cinema workshops had a limited impact after the 1980s, in France a symbiosis seemed to have taken place between *beur* cinema and *jeune cinéma* in terms of aesthetics with the use of an 'optimistic' realism (Prédal 1981, 46-57 and Fahdel 1990, 140-51).

3 - The role of television

Although television made slower inroads into France, compared to Britain, by the 1960s the film industry and television inevitably influenced one another and in most European countries the relationship between these two media was highly regulated and controlled by the state (Forbes and Street 2000, 22). The popularity of television worked against the film industry by draining the audience away from the cinema, especially in Britain where the high quality of television 'was able to meet the need for native forms of entertainment which cinema has failed to satisfy' (Caughie with Rockett 1996, 7). In the 1980s, a key phenomenon was the creation of two innovative TV channels: Channel Four and Canal+. The development of British television, contrasted with the crisis of cinema, triggered the widespread sarcastic comment that British cinema was alive and well and living in television (Auty 1985, 57). With European films being increasingly economically dependent on television, almost all low and medium budget films in Britain were partly-financed by television (Headland and Relph 1991, 8), against one third of French films. From 1986 onwards, the role of television was increased with the creation of the Single Market and the European commission exploring the notion of 'television without frontier' as a way to strengthen the links between the various European countries.

In the 1980s the relationship between cinema and television was highly regulated in France and more or less left to its own destiny in Britain. The promise made by François Mitterrand

in his manifesto that 'television and radio will be decentralized and pluralist' (Proposition 94) was therefore put into action and television was deregulated with the creation of Canal+ in 1985 and La Cinq in 1986 and the privatisation of TF1 also in 1986. The Moinot commission, named after its chairman Pierre Moinot, presented its conclusion on feature films and television in September 1981. The commission encouraged showing a quota of 60% of French films on television, together with increasing world cinema and limiting American films. The broadcasting of feature films obeyed strict procedures, with films being shown first in cinemas, 11 months later on Canal+, a year later on video (with the exception of films which sold fewer than 400 000 tickets at the box-office), and finally 3 years later on television (or 2 years if the film had been co-produced by the channel). Jack Lang (Rival 1983, 4) explained that 'in France it was essential to regulate the evolution of the audio-visual media to restrain an anarchic competition' and changed his function from Minister for Culture (1981-86) to Minister for Culture and Communication (1988-93) in order to have a more coherent policy over the two media. In addition to Canal+, television was required to be more involved in financing cinema through the *compte de soutien*. This existing agreement where each channel had to pay a set-price contribution of FF120 000 per screening was abandoned in 1986 and replaced by a contribution of 1.5% of the channel's global income (called *taxe audiovisuelle*) which allowed more funds to go into film production. In Britain, the major evolution concerned film release which was dependent on the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA). Following the arrival of Channel Four, concessions were made in 1986 by the CEA which accepted that the compulsory period of 3 years between cinema screening and television release was restricted to films which cost over £1.25 million in 1986 and over £4 million in 1988 (Hill 1996b, 157).

3.1 - Channel Four and Canal+

The two channels, which would come to exert a considerable influence on film production in the 1980s, were launched approximately at the same time: 1982 for Channel Four and 1984 for Canal+. Channel Four made three types of investment in feature films: financing entirely a film (*My Beautiful Laundrette*, *The Good Father*), co-producing films with other production companies (*Dance with a Stranger*, *Wish You Were Here*) and purchasing television rights (*Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*). Gradually Channel Four (under the banner of the Film on Four series and Film Four International) decided to support fewer films on its own and became more and more involved in co-producing films in collaboration with private companies, the BFI Production Board and the NFFC/British Screen. Channel Four contributed to the majority of low-budget British films and from the mid-1980s onwards the channel ended up being involved in roughly half of all British feature films produced every year (Petrie 1991, 80). What greatly differentiated Channel Four from the BBC and ITV was its commissioning and purchasing role for films aimed at theatrical release and by the end of the 1980s the channel had invested in over 150 films (Hill 1993, 213). Channel Four also invested in European co-productions, especially art films which countries like France and Italy were prone to co-produce. For instance, Channel Four made *Fatherland* (Ken Loach, 1986) in partnership with MK2 and *Sans toit ni loi* (Agnès Varda, 1985) with Ciné-Tamaris (both French production companies) while benefiting from the *avance sur recettes*. As previously discussed, another area where Channel Four supported filmmakers together with the BFI was in financing regional workshops. Yet, with no apparent justification Channel Four's contribution came to a halt in 1989 after the ending of its three year contract towards the workshops, a decision which was met with anger and disillusionment by the workshops as they were left in a precarious situation (Lovell 1990, 102-8). All in all, the growing popularity of Channel Four film production motivated the other channels whose contribution rose from 4% of all UK

production in 1982 to 47% in 1989 (Lewis 1990, 20) with, for instance, Central Television subsidising *The Hit* (Stephen Frears, 1984), *Wetherby* (David Hare, 1985), *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987), *Made in Britain* (Alan Clarke, 1983), *Personal Services* (Terry Jones, 1986) and *Paris by Night* (David Hare, 1988) while Scottish Television participated in *Gregory's Girl*, *Comfort and Joy* (Bill Forsyth, 1980 and 1984) and *Killing Dad* (Michael Austin, 1989).

The unusual position of Channel Four in the 1980s was also due to the particular kind of aesthetic and thematic approach of the films it produced. Because the channel was indirectly financed by advertising through funding provided by ITV, its reasonably secure position allowed it to make 'cultural' rather than 'commercial' choices concerning film production. Channel Four's Chief Executive Jeremy Isaacs and its Senior Commissioning Editor for Fiction David Rose wanted to produce films thematically anchored in contemporary Britain. Indeed, Jeremy Isaacs, inspired by the choices of the BFI Production Board and the NFFC, greatly encouraged low-budget indigenous films because 'people need to see films that reflect their own experience and tell them about their own situation' (Moses 1982, 266) and David Rose said 'I favour contemporary work. [...] On occasion it can illuminate a subject more clearly and with more effect than current affairs programmes' (Kent 1987, 263). As a result, Channel Four swiftly gained the image of a channel addressing the state of Britain in the 1980s and its 'non-commercial' approach contributed to the channel's successful development. On an aesthetic level, the presence of David Rose as Senior Commissioning Editor contributed to the production of social-realist films. During his earlier experience at BBC2's *Play for Today* and his commissioning support for *Boys from the Blackstuff* (Philip Saville), Rose showed enthusiasm for social-realist productions and in particular the work of David Hare, Mike Leigh and Alan Clarke. It therefore came as no surprise that Rose continued to help their projects (David Hare for *Paris by Night*, *Strapless* and *Wetherby*, Mike Leigh for

High Hopes and Alan Clarke for *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*) together with other social-realist films. In addition, the channel encouraged new scriptwriters and filmmakers, such as Neil Jordan and Hanif Kureishi. In that sense, *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), whose theatrical release was not planned during its shooting in 16mm, came to epitomise the typical Channel Four film: a new mixed-race scriptwriter (Hanif Kureishi), a story set among the ethnic community in contemporary Britain, a small-budget (£ 650,000) and yet a relative commercial and critical success both in Britain and abroad.

If Channel Four influenced British film production both financially, thematically and aesthetically, by contrast Canal+ did not become related to a specific type of production in the 1980s. What Canal+, which presented itself as 'the cinema channel', introduced was on the one hand the availability of over 300 films per year¹³ eleven months after their theatrical release and, on the other, a solid financial contribution to French cinema. Created in 1984 in a polemical climate (because of the novelty of the principle of a pay-channel), Canal+ had only 800 000 subscribers after one year, a situation which rapidly changed when another 1.4 million were added in 1986 (at the beginning, part of Canal+'s success was attributed to the channel broadcasting porn films). With René Bonnell in charge of the cinema section, the channel gradually became the major purchaser of films in France. It also co-financed films such as *Poulet au vinaigre* (1985) and *Trois hommes et un couffin* (1985) at the production stage. First aiming at a young professional urban audience, it broadcast to an increasingly diversified audience, which allowed Canal+ chairman André Rousselet (Baudelot 1986, 10) to boast that 'our public has become the image of France'. The relationship between Canal+ and films' theatrical release remained controversial, since 'a film on Canal+ remains a film and paying for the subscription reflects a personal choice comparable to cinema-going' (Frodon 1995, 633).

The interdependency of cinema and television in the 1980s has generated various responses from critics. On an economic level, Channel Four's contribution was an undeniable safety valve to a struggling British film industry and it allowed the making of a steady 'non-commercial' production which would prove extremely successful in the long run, considering the central role of Film Four International in the 1990s — until it came to a halt in 2002 (Pulver 2002, 2). As for Canal+, its financial contribution benefited French film production as a whole, despite its influence on the increase of the average cost of films. But unlike Channel Four which clearly helped the production of social-realist films, Canal+ did not favour particular genres since it financed a large generic spectrum.

II - DISTRIBUTION, EXHIBITION, AUDIENCE AND FILM CULTURE IN THE 1980s

1 - Distribution and exhibition

At the beginning of the 1980s a duopoly situation was present in both British and French cinemas with the prominence of Thorn-EMI¹⁴ and Rank on the British market and Gaumont-Pathé¹⁵ on the French one. While in Britain a laissez-faire policy was adopted by the government, in France the state advocated an interventionist approach to change the situation. Although few official investigations were made into the British film industry, a report was published in May 1983 on the supply of films for exhibition (Department of Trade 1983). Already in 1966 the Monopolies Commission appointed by the government had reached the conclusion that Thorn-EMI and Rank were imposing unfair trading practices onto the other circuits and independent distributors, but no efficient measures were taken against them. Again in 1980 the two companies were accused of only screening the films they also distributed (a system known as 'tied supplier') and of preventing independent cinemas from booking a film at the same time as they did (known as 'barring'). In doing so, Rank and Thorn-EMI were forcing independent exhibitors out of business, giving the preference to

American commercial films and failing to support British production. As Peter Sainsbury, the then Director of the BFI Production Board explained: 'At no time did they really invest in the longer term health and future of the industry' (Muir 1983, 13). Despite the increasing number of screens in some areas, the range of films available was becoming increasingly smaller as Rank and Thorn-EMI were playing it safe by releasing mainly mainstream American films aimed at the 16-25 age group. Because these circuits were reluctant to spend large sums on publicity and exhibition of the few British films being made, the exhibition sector also played a part in condemning indigenous production to low returns. As for the independent cinemas, the barring system forced most of them to close down. Although the Monopolies and Mergers Commission acknowledged the aforementioned problems, no compulsory measures were taken and the Commission only 'recommend[ed] that arrangements be made to provide that, at any stage in the release of a popular film, that film would not be exhibited for more than four weeks in any cinema unless or until the film had been made available to all other cinemas in effective competition which had sought to exhibit the film' (Department of Trade 1983). The recommendation had little impact on the film industry and the decade ended as it had started in that area.

In France the Bredin Report also revealed a duopoly situation. The distribution and exhibition concentration engendered by the association of Gaumont and Pathé in 1970 had gathered speed during the previous decade and was on the verge of creating a monopoly situation. In order to establish a fairer market for independent distributors and exhibitors, Jack Lang took the bold decision of setting up anti-monopoly measures and abolished the Gaumont-Pathé group in 1983. But the ending of the Gaumont-Pathé monopoly created difficulties for the art-house circuit. This was because the Gaumont-Pathé circuit was screening both art and mainstream films, while the *art et essai* cinemas were losing their specialist markets and part of their audience. However, the situation regarding exhibition remained extremely different in

the two countries. For instance, in 1986 there were 766 film theatres in France classified 'Art et Essai' (CNC Infos 1986b, 25-6) whereas there were only 60 cinemas in Britain showing art films (Docherty, Morrison and Tracey 1987, 53).

During the 1980s there were on average 1600 cinemas in Britain and 4000 in France. Both in France and Britain the 15-25 year old age range formed the majority of the audience and film theatres were largely found in urban areas. In the early 1980s the British exhibition sector was at great risk, with the closure of one cinema per week in 1983 (Eyles 1984, 188), especially in the North of England and the Midlands where unemployment was rising, home video was spreading, and the poor conditions of film theatres in working-class housing areas (due to lack of investment) were said to be deterring audiences. In some areas the Regional Film Theatres, subsidised by the BFI, were the last place to watch a film on the big screen (Docherty 1987, 161). Thus the traditional role of the latter of showing art films aimed at an educated audience had to change as the RFTs often had to play the role of the disappearing commercial exhibition sector in certain areas. A possible remedy mentioned by Jayne Pilling (1984, 273) was to take the work of the *Agence de Développement Régional du Cinéma* as a model by subsidising both mainstream and art house cinemas in these areas. Tackling the same issue, Robert Murphy's article entitled 'The Public has a brain...' (1983/84, 8) demonstrates that films such as *Gregory's Girl* (second best-selling film of 1982) and *Educating Rita* (seventh best-selling film of 1984), which appealed both to a mainstream and an art-house audience, deserved a long-run exhibition as word-of-mouth played a major role in small towns. There was an obvious shortage of art cinema circuits in the provinces, on the model of the Lumière and the Curzon group in London.

The arrival of a new generation of multi-screen cinemas was too slow in 1980s France to modify drastically the exhibition sector while in Britain the multiplex revolution quickly gathered pace from 1987 onwards, from the opening in 1985 of the ten-screen Milton Keynes

complex to 20% share of all British screens by the end of the decade (Eyles 1991, 36). Although the multiplexes were a hard blow to traditional picture houses, they also turned cinema-going into a popular activity again in the second half of the 1980s. However, the overall American programming of the multiplexes meant that they were unlikely to contribute to the revival of British cinema. Indeed, multiplexes were unable to develop a regular audience for foreign-language and European art films. No public policy on a national level was set up and, in this 'survival of the fittest' atmosphere, the film industry was more or less left to its own destiny.

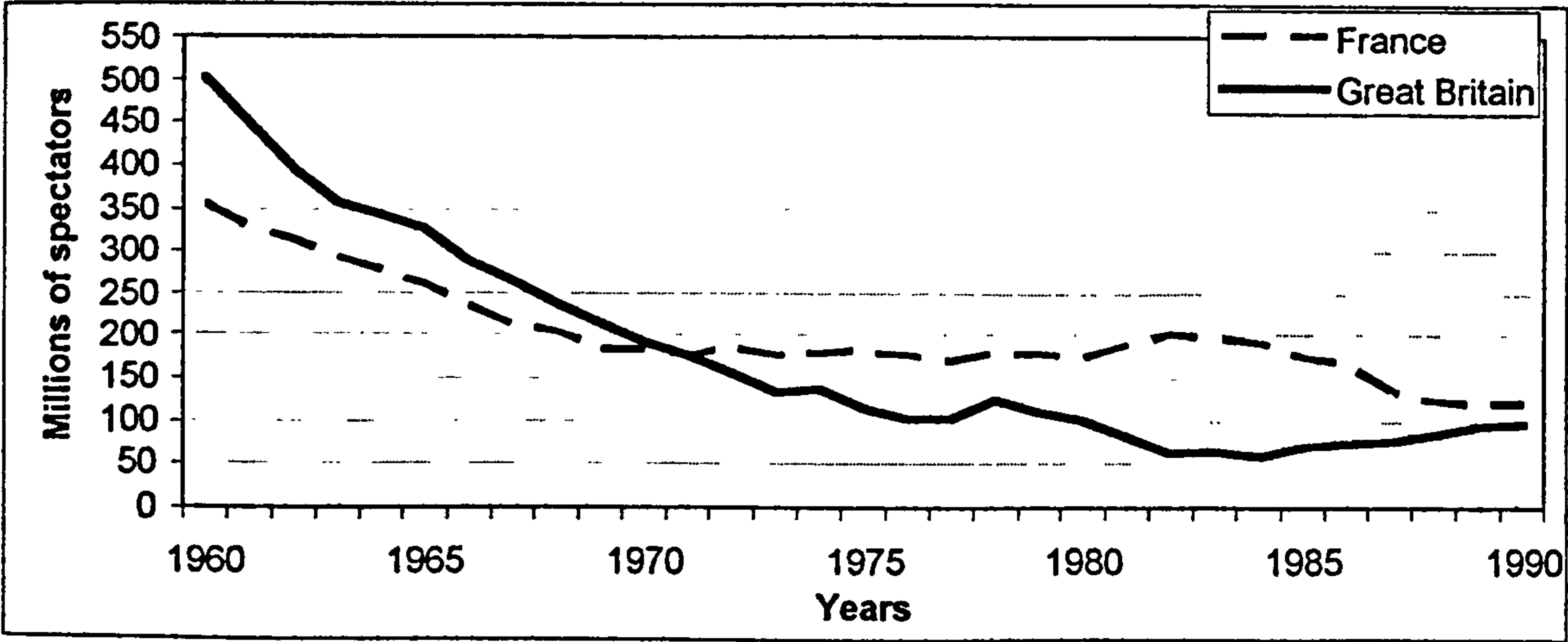
By contrast France emphasized the need for decentralisation in the distribution and exhibition sector through the Bredin report which argued that national programming had provoked the decline in cinema admissions in small towns and semi-rural areas. The report therefore argued that an *Agence de Développement Régional du Cinéma* (Agency for Regional Cinema Development) could contribute to the winning of a 'lost' audience. The novelty of Jack Lang's *fiche 12* generated a large amount of questions among the trade and, as noted by Serge Le Péron (1982, 19), 'it would be wrong to believe that Lang's project is specifically 'socialist''. What is ideological in this project, indeed even socialist, perhaps utopian, is the idea that French cinema will improve by winning back part of the popular audience lost for the past twenty five years'. But the project behind the *fiche 12* proved realistic with the financial help of the Ministry of Culture and it did contribute to the promotion of regional cinema with, for instance, an increase from 11 to 14 million spectators between 1982 and 1986 (Sabouraud 1986, 19) while the total number of spectators fell from 201.1 to 167.8 millions during the same period (Dubet 2000, 34). In 1982 Jack Gajos was appointed at the head of the *Agence de Développement Régional du Cinéma* and had in mind that 'what has changed is not film in itself but the distribution sector. Cinema surrendered to television which has been a major economic mistake' (Le Péron and Sainderichin 1982, 21). To increase the number of cinemas

nationwide, the *Agence* financed the refurbishment of old film theatres and helped investment in the reopening of closed cinemas. These cinemas were provided with free extra-prints of new releases ranging from mainstream films to regional and *art et essai* films. The contentious decision made by Jack Gajos to use cultural subsidies to finance copies of American blockbusters went against the Socialist's general policy to support French cinema. Yet Gajos' counterarguments were that blockbusters contributed to bringing back a popular audience to the cinema and that the profits made through these films could support more 'difficult' films (Pilling 1984, 269).

2 - Audience

The action of the two governments during the 1980s is difficult to estimate exactly in terms of audience, especially since the decline observed in France and Britain was part of a more general process throughout Western Europe. Following the steady decline of the 1960s in both countries, in the 1970s audiences reached a plateau in France while in Britain it continued to decrease. Thus, throughout the 1980s, cinema going remained a more popular form of entertainment in France than in Britain.

Film audience in Britain and France, from 1960 to 1990



Source: *Economie du cinéma européen* (Dubet 2000, 34)

In fact, among Western European countries the incidence of cinema going was the highest in France, where the average spectator went to the cinema 3.5 times a year. By contrast, it was Britain that had the lowest average rate per capita attendance (Headland and Relph 1991, 15). Besides, France managed to defend its national cinema quite well even if American films became more and more present at the box-office, from 30.8% of receipts in 1981 to 55.5% in 1989. By contrast, American films represented 84% of receipts in Britain in 1989 (Dubet 2000, 62). The following grid reveals that although France retained more spectators overall, as seen on the previous graph, 1985 marked a turning point¹⁶ with the decline of spectatorship in France while in Britain 'Apparently the miracle happened' (Docherty 1986, 13) with the resurgence of a 'lost' audience.

Cinema admission in France and Britain from 1980 to 1989 (in millions of spectators)

Year:	France	Britain
1980	175	101
1981	189.2	86
1982	201.9	60
1983	198.8	71
1984	190.8	58
1985	175	70.1
1986	167.8	72.6
1987	136.7	78.7
1988	124.7	84.2
1989	120.9	96.4

Source: Dubet 2000, 34

Even if cinema admissions seemed relatively flourishing in France in comparison with the British figures, the question of audiences was at the core of governmental preoccupations. However, state intervention did not succeed in bringing back French spectators to the cinema by the end of the decade. In Britain, the second half of the 1980s was a relative victory for the British film industry with a regular increase in audiences. In terms of box-office (Appendix three), American films dominated the British Top Twenty with, on average, fourteen

American films per year (in France it was only, on average, eight American films per year). Moreover, among the most popular British films, few of them were totally British in terms of production. For instance, the *James Bond* and *Superman* films made in the 1980s, which were in the Top Twenty, were British-made but financed by American money. The same ambiguous status applied to films like *Clockwise*, *A Fish called Wanda* and *Shirley Valentine*, to take examples of films analysed in the forthcoming chapters. In fact, among British films about contemporary society present in the Top Twenty, only *Breaking Glass*, *Gregory's Girl*, *Educating Rita* and *Mona Lisa* entirely qualified as British, while *auteurs* like David Hare, Mike Leigh and Stephen Frears were notably absent from the box-office. In the 1980s, the Top Twenty therefore highlighted how film culture in Britain was closely linked to American productions. In comparison, French films managed to attract a reasonably large indigenous audience. As expected, the two dominant genres were comedies and crime films. Many 1980s French films dealing with society were popular successes, the most significant examples being *La Boum* (the second best-selling film of 1981), *Marche à l'ombre* (best-selling film of 1984) and *Trois hommes et un couffin* (second best-selling film of 1986). Even if French cinema became increasingly threatened by American hegemony by the end of the 1980s, it nevertheless remained an important component of French film culture. As the following chapters will show, many Top Twenty French films of the 1980s refer to contemporary society. In the next section, the role of film culture constitutes another area of debate which helps to understand why cinema was a more popular activity in France and why film audiences remained low in Britain.

3 - Film Culture

The study of a national cinema could not be complete without the acknowledgement of film culture. Even if cinema is mainly analysed in relation to the film industry and cinematic

discourse, the notion of film culture should not be forgotten (McIntyre 1985, 67). Indeed, when comparing British and French cinemas, the discrepancy between film culture is a vital element in understanding the status of film in the two countries. The general comment that is usually associated with France and Britain is that in the former film culture has always played an important role whereas in the latter it has never been given the consideration that it deserves, even if audiences were much larger in Britain than in France until the mid-1970s. Already in the 1930s 'compared to France there was at this time little interest in the art of the film, or in the cinema as what might now be called a 'cultural industry" (Petley 1986a, 32). A significant difference between the two national cinemas in their early stages was that, by being put under the supervision of the Ministry of Education¹⁷, French cinema was seen primarily for its 'cultural' aspect whereas British cinema was first perceived as another type of 'industry' regulated by the Board of Trade. The policy of the British government was 'dedicated much more significantly to the regulation of the market and the protection of the manufacturing industry than to the sustenance of a national film culture' (Caughie with Rockett 1996, 4). In fact, while French cinema has always benefited from a privileged position (Harris 2000, 208-19), Britain's attention has been directed towards the world of theatre, galleries and concert halls, which are considered as more established art forms (Mulgan and Worpole 1986, 17-34).

Film culture may be defined in relation to the amount of debate surrounding films in the media, the celebration of cinema with awards and festivals and generally people's attitude to cinema. One major difference between the two countries was that, in the 1980s, French mainstream cinema was fuelled by both indigenous and American productions, whereas in Britain it remained the almost exclusive province of Hollywood. Even if the British Top Twenty indicates that a number of British films were successful in the 1980s (Appendix three), can one consider films such as the *Superman* series to be British simply because of its

making by British technicians in British film studios? As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1985, 151) argues 'The hidden history of cinema in British culture, and in popular culture in particular, has been the history of American films popular with the British public'. These are vast questions which require an extensive development and this section will only pinpoint the general differences in the way film culture was understood in 1980s Britain and France. During that decade, the question of film culture was considered crucial among British scholars. Hence, Vincent Porter (1979, 223) wrote in an enlightening article entitled 'Film policy for the 80s: industry or culture?' that 'the failure of quota policy, of the automatic distribution of the Eady levy and of the NFFC as a commercial operation point logically to a cultural policy for film'. Discussing New British Cinema, Thomas Elsaesser (1993, 59) argues that 'what perhaps is missing in Britain is a film culture from the grass roots up'. And presenting British cinema to the public more for its cultural than its commercial value was considered as a possible remedy by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1985, 157) who claims that 'in the late eighties, it is film culture rather than the film industry which merits public attention and concern'. Despite the following statement in *Film Policy* (1984) that:

'A film industry can be a matter of great national pride. And through its ability to project the national film culture and way of life to a wide audience overseas it can thus enhance a country's international standing'. (11.1)

The contribution of the British government towards a more established film culture remained limited during the 1980s. It was not until June 1990 that Margaret Thatcher admitted the importance of British cinema and the need to support it with governmental help (Headland and Relph 1991, 1). In France, by contrast, cinema became increasingly part of a national cultural heritage celebrated more than ever under Jack Lang. The idea of film culture put forward was that it should include both mainstream and art cinemas — or, as stated in the Bredin report (Bredin 1981, 8), 'the war between Louis de Funès and Marguerite Duras will

not take place'. Even if some boundaries remained between these two types of cinema, the French government considered that the promotion of cinema had to be as inclusive as possible. The role of the specialised press and the celebration of cinema through awards and festivals are two key elements to gauge the impact of film culture in Britain and France.

3.1 - Film periodicals

In 1980s Britain and France media discourses about the cinema included film reviews in the daily press (*The Guardian*, *The Times*, *Le Monde*, *Libération...*), information about the industry in trade papers (*Screen International*, *Le Film français*), specialised journalism (*Sight and Sound*, *Les Cahiers du cinéma*, *Positif...*) and publications aiming at an academic readership (*Screen*, *CinémAction*). So far, film writing in Britain and France appear comparable. There are however major discrepancies. One is the amount of space devoted to films in the French press, which is much larger than in Britain. The other concerns the abundance of specialised publications in France with over thirty film magazines and journals compared to a limited output in Britain (see Appendix four for a list of titles). One innovation in the 1980s was the growing importance of popular film magazines, replacing the old fan magazines. *Première*, created in 1978, would become the most popular film magazine in France during the decade. Encouraged by its success, its founder Marc Esposito launched another popular — if more stylish — film magazine in 1987: *Studio*. In Britain, this was matched by the arrival of *Empire* in 1989. Writing about popular cinema, *Première* and *Studio* focused on mainstream French and American films while for *Empire* popular cinema largely meant American cinema (echoing the restricted release of popular British cinema).

Moving towards more serious journals, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* were both published by the British Film Institute and constituted two essential pillars of film criticism in Britain. Although the *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* did have their

own film critics, the influence of British film scholars (some of them wrote for both journals) on these two journals was highly perceptible in the 1980s with regular contributions from academics such as Charles Barr, Pam Cook, Jill Forbes, Julian Petley, Vincent Porter and Ginette Vincendeau. As for specialist French journals, *Les Cahiers du cinéma* and *Positif* clearly stood out in terms of international recognition, even if they became less visible abroad in the 1980s. By contrast with the two British journals, *Les Cahiers du cinéma* and *Positif* were famous for their critical rivalry and the traditionally more left-wing position of *Positif*. The prestige of *Les Cahiers du cinéma* was also due to the number of critics who became renowned filmmakers (François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, André Téchiné, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette). In the 1980s, the financial difficulties of many film journals by contrast with the flourishing popularity of *Première* forced French film criticism to question itself (Zimmer 1997, 120). In 1981, Serge Daney left *Les Cahiers du cinéma* and was replaced by Serge Toubiana whose ten year editorship has been the longest in *Les Cahiers du cinéma's* history. Aware that *Les Cahiers du cinéma* required a wider readership in order to remain commercially viable, Toubiana worked towards a more accessible and appealing format (for a thorough discussion on *Les Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1980s, see Darke 1993, 362-79). Another important influential aspect of *Les Cahiers du cinéma* was the creation in 1984 of their own publishing company: Les Editions de l'Etoile. In the 1980s, *Positif*, under the editorship of Michel Ciment, equally tried to change its policy by focusing on unexplored national cinemas and the cultural legacy of major film movements. The two journals' attitude towards French cinema, and more particularly towards the films studied in this thesis, was, despite their famous antagonism, a shared praise for *auteur* films like Pialat's *A nos amours* and *Police*, Varda's *Sans toit ni loi*, Téchiné's *Le Lieu du crime* and Brisseau's *Noce blanche*. It is on mainstream films that the critical opinion expressed in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* and *Positif* somehow diverged, with *Les Cahiers du cinéma* rejecting almost systematically

comedies whereas *Positif* saw in these films a new way of looking at French society. For instance, *Le Complexe du kangourou*, *Marche à l'ombre*, *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir*, *Trois hommes et un couffin* and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* were enthusiastically reviewed in *Positif* and criticized by *Les Cahiers du cinéma*. As regards British cinema, *Les Cahiers du cinéma* were mildly enthusiastic (in particular with *auteurs* like Ken Loach and Mike Leigh), but clearly disliked British comedies like *Educating Rita* and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*. By contrast, *Positif* showed a steady support for British cinema during the 1980s with nine front covers dedicated to British films¹⁸ and a plethora of articles analysing the state of British cinema. With a few exceptions (*Betrayal*, *Educating Rita*, *Personal Services*), *Positif* was highly enthusiastic about 1980s British films praising, for instance, *Babylon*, *A Fish called Wanda*, *Gregory's Girl*, *High Hopes*, *Looks and Smiles*, *Meantime* and *Mona Lisa*. In Britain, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* tended to review French films positively, even the occasional mainstream films which reached British screens, such as *La Balance* and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*. Towards its own cinema, *Sight and Sound* was rather positive in reviews, with the exception of *Britannia Hospital* and *A Letter to Brezhnev* which it disliked. The *Monthly Film Bulletin's* attitude towards British cinema was divided, yet no conclusion can be drawn in terms of genre or popularity. Hence, while films like *Burning an Illusion*, *Business as Usual*, *A Fish called Wanda*, *Gregory's Girl*, *Rita*, *Sue and Bob Too* and *High Hopes* were positively reviewed in this journal, *Babylon*, *Educating Rita*, *Giro City*, *The Long Good Friday*, *The Ploughman's Lunch* and *Steaming* did not meet the favour of the critics. It therefore appears that a more enthusiastic support towards British cinema was provided by *Positif* than by British journals.

3.2 - The Cannes and London Film Festivals

Sometimes the comparison between British and French cinemas appears inappropriate as the compared objects are so drastically different. It is precisely the case when comparing the Cannes Film Festival — the second world media event after the Olympic Games — and the London Film Festival which operates on the smallest budget of any major festival (Wlaschin 1980, 2) and does not benefit from the same amount of press coverage. Or, in terms of film screenings, an average of 400 films were presented at Cannes versus 100 at the London Film Festival in the early 1980s. Another major difference between the two festivals is that Cannes is a film market while London is a film festival only. However, the evolution of the two international festivals during the 1980s offers interesting feedback about the position of cinema in the two countries.

As part of a larger film organisation — the British Film Institute, the London Film Festival was financially supported by the Greater London Council until the mid-1980s (when the Council ceased to exist). What became the London Boroughs Grants Scheme continued to assist the LFF, together with Channel Four, Thames Television and the British Council among other sponsors. The LFF considered itself the festival of festivals up to the mid-1980s since it mainly presented the most interesting films of the year from other festivals and as a result did not give prizes. From 1980 to 1983, there were around a hundred films presented each year, including on average fifteen British feature films. With the British cinema section representing almost half of the overall British production, it was clear that Programme Director Ken Wlaschin used the LFF as a platform for promoting indigenous production while celebrating the 'coming of age of the New British Cinema' (Wlaschin 1982, 2) with the screening of four new British films at the gala opening night in 1982. Yet, it was the appointment of Derek Malcolm in 1984 which marked a turning point in the direction of the festival, both in term of size (from 125 films before his arrival to 174 in 1984 and 201 in 1986

in his last year as director) and orientation. More confident, Malcolm (1984, 2) declared 'We do have original thoughts of our own!' and favoured two main areas: British films (32 films in 1984, 44 in 1985 and 55 in 1986) and a Third World section which would contribute to the specific identity of the LFF for the rest of the 1980s. Openly optimistic and enthusiastic towards the revival of British cinema, Malcolm nevertheless reminded the need for an audience in Britain when claiming that 'The Cinema isn't dead yet' in his editorial (Malcolm 1986, 3). Unlike Cannes which was the privilege of the happy few despite the ever-growing size of the festival, the LFF became resolutely open to the public with the shift from the National Film Theatre as exclusive venue to the spreading to eight different venues in 1984, the Festival in the Square in 1986 and an increased range of cinemas from The Screen on the Green to the Brixton Village Cultural Centre in 1989. With its third director Sheila Whitaker from 1987 to 1989, the LFF gradually lost interest in British cinema (46 films in 1987, 29 in 1988 and under 20 in the following two years) and favoured more particularly Third World cinema (then called Three continents) and video.

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Created in 1939 and re-launched after the war, the Cannes Film Festival as well as being a film market not only celebrates contemporary international cinema but also positions itself as the living memory of cinema with yearly retrospectives. In the 1980s, Cannes's increasing popularity as the biggest film market in the world (from 8,000 professionals in 1980 to 17,000 in 1990) was symbolic of the central role played by cinema in France and represented a potential loss of artistic value in favour of a more commercial approach. It was for this reason that in the 1980s, no matter how tempting it was on a financial level, Cannes refused to include video and television within the festival (a separate festival is devoted to them). Even if the CNC financed over half of the festival budget, Cannes was totally independent from state decisions. However, national celebrations of the cinema throughout the 1980s contributed to reinforcing the place of the festival in the media. And, as Pierre Billard (1997,

78) explains, 'the festival's secret dream is to encourage *auteur* cinema to remain accessible to a rather large audience and to foster the renewal of an entertaining cinema'¹⁹. The festival's policy towards both art and mainstream cinemas was therefore comparable to the state policy advocated by Jack Lang.

3.3 - Awards ceremonies and other celebrations

Though this section will be brief, it aims to further illustrate the different policies adopted by Britain and France towards their national cinemas. Both the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards (BAFTA) and the César ceremonies are a one evening event where the film trade expresses its opinion about films released during the past year. The attribution of these awards decided by a selecting committee plays a role in the future commercial and critical success of films. What is significant in terms of a comparison is that the Césars were designed to reward French cinema and to compete with the Oscar ceremony in Hollywood, whereas the BAFTAs reflect the hegemony of American cinema in Britain. Thus, in the 1980s, the BAFTAs favoured either American films or heritage/colonial British films (Appendix five). By contrast, the Césars enshrined the importance of the national production to the national audience as to qualify films have to be shot in French (it is a highly popular event on television with large coverage in the press, on a much larger scale than the BAFTAs in British film culture). In the 1980s, the only two foreign films which were awarded a César, Andrezej Wajda's *Danton* and Ettore Scola's *Le Bal*, were films whose production was supported by the *aide directe* from the French Ministry of Culture.

In 1985, a major initiative entitled British Film Year was set up by the trade in order to promote a British film culture nationwide (Adair and Roddick 1985, 78, Howkins 84/85, 8). Set up as a non-profit organisation supported with £500,000 from the Department of Trade (twice as much as was originally promised in *Film Policy* (Department of Trade 1984, 9.2)),

British Film Year started in March 1985 with the première of David Lean's *A Passage to India* (1984) under the patronage of The Prince and Princess of Wales. The primary focus of British Film Year was to increase cinema admission under the slogan 'Cinema — the best place to see a film' and to promote British cinema abroad. At home, British Film Year launched a BFY Roadshow in Leicester Square (May 1985) for a nationwide promotion of cinema through 25 cities, supported by the active co-operation throughout the regions of schools, cinemas, town councils, art centres and museums (Ellis 1985, 67). A survey made by the Broadcasting Research Unit (Docherty 1986, 13) confirmed that people placed British Film Year's efforts as a strong factor in bringing them back to the cinema, thus contributing to the increase in cinema admission in 1985 and 1986 (from 58 million spectators in 1983 to 70 in 1985 and 76 in 1986). Abroad, a group of films (*The Hit* (Stephen Frears, 1984), *Local Hero* (Bill Forsyth, 1983), *Another Country* (Marek Kaniévski, 1984) and *Wetherby* (David Hare, 1985)) were presented under the banner of 'The Revival Years', as a more systematic promotion of contemporary British cinema. The other raison d'être of BFY abroad was to convince European producers that Britain was a serious filmmaking nation which offered high quality studios and technical services (Park 1985, 248), a position which would be further developed in the early 1990s.

The main difference between the celebrations which took place in 1980s Britain and France was that despite its strengths, the British Film Year initiative was a single event which has not yet been repeated. By contrast, the majority of events which were set up in France in the 1980s continued to exist after the end of the decade. For instance, the initiative for which Jack Lang is still remembered is the *fête du cinéma*, a popular celebration of cinema²⁰. This *fête*, which has taken place on one or two days each year, consists of buying a normal price ticket and, for a symbolic FF1 (now 1 euro), being given access to other screenings during the prescribed period. The presence of film stars and filmmakers also contributed to make the *fête*

a special event highly supported by the media. Launched on 14th June 1985, the first *fête du cinéma* raised the usual number of tickets by a factor of six with 1.4 million spectators on that day (Le Roux 1986, 26). Meeting the enthusiasm of a teenage audience, the post-baccalaureate date of 26th June was judiciously chosen the following year and increased tickets to 1.8 million (Buraud 1986, 3). The extraordinary success of the *fête du cinéma* corresponded to the Socialist's desire to turn cinema again into a popular social activity, even if the *fête* seemed to be the victim of its own popularity as the older generation was allegedly deterred by the high attendances. In the same way, a number a new festivals (*Festival du film des cultures méditerranéennes* in 1982, *Festival du cinéma d'Ales* in 1983, *Festival international du documentaire* in 1989) were born with the help of the Ministry of Culture during the 1980s and are still in existence now. Most of them were financially supported by the *Centre National de la Cinématographie* (CNC Infos 1988b, 5) and the presence of over 300 film festivals contributed to the celebration of cinema not only nationwide but throughout the year (Leclercq 1986, 55-8).

CONCLUSION

In the 1980s, the difficulties encountered by the British and French film industries were no exception to a general trend present in most European film industries. Faced with a similar decline in audiences, the ever-growing importance of television, the difficulty to keep up its production level and the harsh competition from American hegemony, European cinema in the 1980s had to reassess its position (Finney 1993, Hill 1994, 53-80, Petrie 1994, Jackel 1996, 293-309 and Forbes and Street 2000). The long-term decline of cinema audiences in France and Britain, which started well before the 1980s, confirmed the tendency of the 1970s as cinema remained more popular in France than in Britain. The two governments greatly influenced film production on two different levels: first through regulations towards the film

industry and secondly through financial contribution, in particular to public-funded institutions. Overall, the Socialist government's attitude towards French cinema was supportive in that it tried to provide an all-encompassing support to the industry as a whole and in doing so probably prevented a further decline of the film industry. The failure of the free market policy of the Conservative government towards the film industry was counterbalanced by a renewed interest of Hollywood for British production during the first half of the decade and the remarkable contribution of Channel Four in establishing a regular level of production in the second half.

The 1980s can be seen as continuing what was set up during the previous decades through the *soutien automatique* and the *avance sur recettes* in France and the National Film Finance Corporation and the BFI Production Board in Britain, which in some respects influenced the films produced in each country. In this area, the decade, in terms of the funds allocated by the French and British states to film institutions, saw an important increase in France and a major restriction in Britain. In that sense, it can be said that the state directly influenced national production. Thanks to its important budget, the *commission d'avance* was able to diversify its help and supported a great variety — both generically and thematically — of films. By contrast, the NFFC, British Screen and the BFI were allocated a limited budget and their choice was to favour small-budget films as a way of helping as many directors as possible. The people appointed as heads of these institutions (Mamoun Hassan, Simon Relph, Colin McCabe and Peter Sainsbury) expressed their liking for the realist vein applied to films depicting contemporary reality. Whereas the state had a strong influence in determining their financial contribution to the film industry, and therefore film budgets, a freedom of choice was found within French and British institutions. In France, although the Bredin report (Bredin 1981, 14) encouraged the *avance* to favour a 'quality' French cinema, the committee remained free to make its own choices and public money was used to describe, for instance,

the harsh conditions of living in the *banlieue* (*De bruit et de fureur*, *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède*) and the unemployed taking advantage of public money (*La Comédie du travail*, *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*). Adopting a much more critical attitude in Britain, directors denounced the action of the government — though ironically with the help of public money — in films such as *Britannia Hospital*, *Fords on Water*, *High Hopes* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. Although the subsidised sector was directly penalised by the government's decision to abolish the Eady levy, the positive side of this new economic constraint was that it somehow benefited the British production by triggering a flurry of small-budget films. Yet, by the end of the decade it became clear that the British film industry required some help — financial as well as legislative — in order to produce more films. In comparison, the complaints concerning French cinema appeared to be those of an over-assisted industry in a country where the state was engaged on every level to promote cinema.

CHAPTER THREE:

Society

PREAMBLE

This chapter examines the way contemporary British and French societies were perceived in films made in the 1980s. In order to do so, this dissertation could have included 1980s films set up in the past since this decade was particularly rich in producing films based in the post-war period and the so-called heritage films. Yet, I decided to leave them aside for two reasons. The first one was that these films have generated an important scholarly material and extremely valuable analysis of these films have been written, for instance, by Andrew Higson (1993, 109-29 and 1996, 232-48), Geoff Eley (1994, 17-43), Sarah Street (1997, 102-6), John Hill (1999, 71-130) and Sheldon Hall (2001, 191-9) and an edited collection by Ginette Vincendeau (2002) on the British side and by Guy Austin (1996, 142-70), Phil Powrie (1997, 13-74), Maria Esposito (2001, 11-26), Carrie Tarr and Brigitte Rollet (2001, 251-80) on the French side. Considering the limited format of this work, it appeared more useful to dedicate this work on films focusing on contemporary Britain and France as it corresponded to an area where more research deserved to be done. The second reason was that, by including films set in the past, the general picture about British and French societies would have been quite similar to the conclusions reached by only focusing on films about contemporary Britain and France. To take a single example, films grounded in 1950s Britain such as *Dance with a Stranger* (Mike Newell, 1985) and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (Terence Davies, 1988) echo the portrayal of family relationships, and in particular the position of women within the family, found in films set in the 1980s. For these two reasons this thesis only takes into account films based in contemporary Britain and France.

For similar reasons, the avant-garde films of British filmmakers (such as Peter Greenaway or Derek Jarman) and the French *cinéma du look* (Luc Besson, Jean-Jacques Beineix, Léos Carax) have been left aside since the analysis of their films corresponded to an already well-researched area with, for instance, Sarah Street (1997, 174-87), John Orr (2000, 327-38) and

Michael O'Pray (2001, 256-62) writing about the British avant-garde films and Frederic Jameson (1990, 55-62), René Prédal (1996, 546-56), Guy Austin (1996, 119-41), Phil Powrie (1997, 109-40) and Susan Hayward (1998) writing on the *cinéma du look*. Since these avant-garde cinemas contributed to a rather similar perception of the two societies on a thematic level, it corroborated my idea of concentrating on a less 'experimental' cinema.

The three following chapters are therefore dedicated to the vision of society provided by films anchored in contemporary Britain and France. Unlike chapters four and five which focus on a particular theme, respectively the world of work and the family, the aim of chapter three is to refer to society through various themes by including quite a wide range of films. Thus, this chapter offers a rather wide picture of 1980s society by studying its film representation at several levels: people in power, institutions and individuals. Because the decision to compare British and French cinemas in this particular decade was triggered by the coming to power of the Conservative Party in Britain in 1979 and the Socialist Party in France in 1981, the first section deals with the representation of members of the governments in films. The election of Margaret Thatcher and François Mitterrand came after a long span of the opposition in power and therefore it was felt as no ordinary election in the political history of the two countries. As a result, these elections were accompanied by strong expectations from the population who clearly wanted political and social changes to take place. Although, in France, the Socialist Party found it hard to reconcile the state of French economy with the expectations of its electorate, it nevertheless was committed to a series of important social measures (the presence of former Lille mayor Pierre Mauroy as Prime Minister clearly positioned the government towards that direction) such as the creation of 65,000 jobs in the public sector and a constant fight against unemployment, the introduction of the Revenu Minimum d'Insertion (the guarantee of a minimum income) in 1988, increases of family allowances, more equality in favour of women, promoting access to education for all as well as professional training. On

a highly symbolical level, it also abolished the death penalty in October 1981. In Britain, the Conservative Party expressed its will to curtail public expenditure and decided to reduce direct taxations as a way of making individuals responsible as much as possible of their income. Consequently, family allowances were reduced, claiming unemployment benefit became even more means-tested and the selling of council flats to private owners was strongly encouraged with, for instance, half a million flats sold between 1979 and 1983. Education and health also corresponded to a sector where public spending was reduced and more financial freedom was given to these two institutions. In this particular climate, how were politicians pictured in films focusing on members of the government? Did the 1980s produce a substantial number of films about the new government in Britain and France? Which particular issues caught the attention of the filmmakers? What was the perception of these films among scholars and film critics? The first part of this chapter will deal with these questions by establishing the impact of the arrival of the two governments on films.

The consequences of decisions made at governmental level can be measured through their impact on state institutions. Political choices concerning these institutions were extremely different in the two countries with France opting for a rather social approach and Britain being in favour of a more market-oriented policy. Since institutions such as education, health and the police contribute to the elaboration of a social structure, it is worth analysing how they were perceived in films. Therefore, the second part of this chapter is dedicated to the representation of state institutions in 1980s films. The reason why the section about education and health is rather short in comparison with the section on crime films is due to the popularity of this genre both in terms of production and box-office results.

As for the third part, it deals with the representation of individuals in British and French societies — that is to say, individuals depicted in relation to the social fabric which surrounds them. In that respect, films focusing on a group of individuals are particularly interesting as

constituting a microcosm of their society. Class plays such a crucial role in British society — and consequently in 1980s British cinema — that it is necessary to include it in this work. In this comparative study, what is worth underlining is how the division of British society in relation to social classes was also found in 1980s French cinema. But, in the latter, the presence of a go-between character revealed that, although social classes existed in French society, films tended to focus on characters who made the link between these various social classes.

INTRODUCTION

'Society is now clear in two main senses: as our most general term for the body of institutions and relationships within which a relatively large group of people live; and as our most abstract term for the condition in which such institutions and relationships are formed'. If we are to accept Raymond Williams's (1976, 243) definition of the word society, then it is clear that almost every single British and French film anchored in the 1980s discusses both elements of his concept. And yet, in order to construct an image of the two societies provided by their film production, choices need to be made. As Arthur Marwick (1996, 7) notes in his introduction to *British Society since 1945*, the difficulty in writing about society is due to the presence of 'a number of fundamental factors, institutions, and concepts relating to the study of societies, such as population, the family, housing, eating habits, and social class'. In my case, the thematic choice is first of all motivated by film production and which subjects French and British directors decided to tackle. Not only is production revealing in the number of films focusing on a particular issue, but also in the changes perceptible in a given decade. It goes without saying that dealing with a comparative study, thematic discrepancies between French and British productions also need to be taken into account. Although to my knowledge little has been written on a comparative level, the representation of society in 1980s British and

French cinemas has been widely discussed separately. The 1980s constitute a fascinating decade in the critical contradictions, both from leading scholars and film critics, that British and French films engender in relation to their depiction of society. To the question 'Do 1980s French and British cinemas illustrate the social climate of their contemporary societies?', film scholars and critics have provided varied answers. However, the general tendency is that contemporary social issues were clearly addressed in British cinema while French cinema ignored its social reality as much as possible.

As far as British cinema is concerned, Anglo-American scholars unanimously agree on its social anchorage. Thus, for John Hill (1999a, xi-xii) 'much of what was distinctive about British cinema in the 1980s was precisely the way in which it responded to the social changes around it and sought to address contemporary social and cultural developments', while Sarah Street (1997, 106) considers that the 1980s produced films which 'dealt with contemporary social problems in an overt manner' and Leister Friedman (1993, 10) corroborates this idea by writing that 'British films of this period could not help being political (in the broadest sense of that word), as they charted the inexorably downward spiral of their homeland'. Focusing on the working class in British social realism, Samantha Lay (2002, 83) recalls that 'a range of filmmakers chose to articulate their fears and concerns for the state of Britain in the 1980s'. And in his polemical conclusion, film critic James Park (1990, 169) argues that the difficulties encountered by British cinema in the 1980s were partly due to the close relationship 'between British films and British life'. Of particular interest in this connection is an article published in 1988 in the *Sunday Times* whose content roused the ire of members of the film trade and critics: see for instance Hanif Kureishi's reply in *The Guardian* (1988, 19), and Derek Jarman's in *The Sunday Times* (1988, C9), as well as Julian Petley's analysis in *The Listener* (1988, 14). This notorious article entitled 'Through a Lens Darkly' written by Norman Stone (1988, C1-2), Professor of Modern History at Oxford, constitutes a violent attack against six

'disgusting', 'worthless and insulting' British films²¹ which 'represent at best a tiny part of modern England, and, more likely, a nasty part of their producers' brains'. A discordant tone in the unanimous reaction to Stone came from French scholar Philippe Pilard (1989, 117) who asserted that in 1980s films there were 'no general ideas, no message, no ideology: just a sarcastic laugh'. But apart from Pilard, in France, *Les Cahiers du cinéma* (Katsahnias 1987a, 60-8), *Positif* (Le Fanu 1986, 53-8) and *La Revue du cinéma* (Alion and Colpart 1988, 41-3) adopted a similar position to that of Anglo-American film scholars. For instance, in their dossier entitled 'Actualité du cinéma anglais' published in *La Revue du cinéma*, Alion and Colpart (1988, 42) stated that 1980s British cinema produced stories which were 'rooted in a particularly rich social and political soil'.

Most French and Anglo-American scholars agreed that 1980s French cinema was considerably removed from its contemporary reality. In France, René Prédal (1996, 442) assessed the 1980s as a decade where 'French cinema avoids a straightforward reflection on its time' because 'left-wing filmmakers fight enthusiastically against a right-wing government and remain unheard under a socialist government' while Gilles Laprévotte (2000, 129) explained that 'the political and cultural upheavals are strangely absent from French films'. Similarly in Britain, Susan Hayward (1993a, 246-7) wrote that 'French cinema of the 1980s was essentially non-oppositional' with a closing down of the social sphere, a position equally adopted by Phil Powrie (1997, 7) who considered that 'if one is a critic wedded to the notion that the cinema should reflect some kind of truth, rather than merely purvey doubtful pleasure, then the cinema of the 1980s is disappointing'. In the same way, French film historian Jean-Michel Frodon (1995, 595) wrote that despite Mitterrand's election, there was not much change in the cinema and a large proportion of French films were made of 'a mixture of everyday life and nostalgia for a more optimistic world'. And in a substantial article entitled 'Le cinéma français des années 1980' published in *La Revue du cinéma*, François Chevassu

(1988, 62) asserted that 'as for films that could provide a valid comment on contemporary France, they only represent a minority, all the more if one asks for quality'. A discordant voice came from philosopher Jacques Rancière (1985, 107) who argued in an interview given to *Les Cahiers du cinéma* that even if political films tended to have disappeared in 1980s French cinema, this did not prevent the illustration of certain themes like the French underclass, people on the margins and racism. A parallel can be drawn between this unusual approach and the position adopted by British journalist Robin Buss (1988, 46) who considered that French 'cinema of the eighties certainly gave a rounded portrait of a country which might, or might not, be an accurate representation: it depends, as it always had, on which of its many social and geographical communities constituted your particular idea of France'.

This brief overview of scholars and critics' positions towards French and British cinemas of the 1980s reveals that although British cinema has been more generally associated with social representation than French cinema, a certain degree of confusion remains. With the help of a comparative study between the two national cinemas, I intend to demonstrate that from a thematic perspective French and British cinemas in the 1980s refer mostly to similar issues. This chapter focuses first on the representation of the state, then on its institutions and in the third part on individuals within society. The section on the representation of the state focuses on the way the government and the media were perceived since in terms of film the two components were closely linked. Following the pyramid-shaped construction of society, public institutions on screen are then analysed, especially education and health, then law and order. The aspiration of the individual and his or her position within society closes this chapter. Considering that the changing nature of work and the family during the 1980s deserved a more thorough approach, these two themes are treated separately in the last two chapters.

I - THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA

My aim in this section is not to read films as political fictions (or what was qualified in the 1970s by *Les Cahiers du cinéma* as left-wing fiction for instance) but to offer an analysis of the representation of people in power in French and British films of the 1980s. Therefore, the debate around the question of whether 'there is no political cinema in France in the 1980s' (Siclier 1993, 173) or that 'politics never left our screen' (Bordes and Serceau 1986, 62) is not relevant in this section. But Frodon's comment 'apart from rare exceptions, there are no films depicting 'the left-in-power' in terms of content' (Frodon 1995, 573) can be considered as the starting point of this section. Similarly, although making a distinction between 'State of the Nation' films and political thrillers in British cinema is necessary in terms of genre, my focus is mainly on how politicians were represented in 1980s films and therefore the two categories will be included.

In common with other eras, the 1980s did not produce a substantial number of French or British films featuring fictitious members of the government in leading parts. Film scholars generally note that the arrival in power of Mitterrand (following 35 years of right-wing government) and Thatcher generated very little filmic fiction directly representing these political events, whilst British cinema referred more frequently to the social consequences of such a change. In that respect, two devices were adopted in order to include political figures within narratives, either by having one of the main protagonists as a member of the government or through a *mise en abîme* revealing a vicarious vision of the government through the media.

The representation of the political world is a common theme which cuts across boundaries of genre and popularity and provides a starting point for comparing the two national productions. In French cinema, the films most frequently referred to in this field (Siclier 1993, 173-7, Frodon 1995, 573-4, Déhée 2000, 154-61) are *Le Bon plaisir* (Francis Girod, 1983), *L'Etat de*

grâce (Jacques Rouffio, 1986), *Etats d'âme* (Jacques Fansten, 1986), *Une nuit à l'Assemblée nationale* (Jean-Pierre Mocky, 1988) and *Le Quatrième pouvoir* (Serge Leroy, 1985) even if, as its title indicates, this last film verged more towards the media world than the political world²². On the British side, *Defence of the Realm* (David Drury, 1985), *Giro City* (Karl Francis, 1982) and *The Ploughman's Lunch* (Richard Eyre, 1983) focused on the importance of the media in relation to governmental power while *Paris by Night* (David Hare, 1988) depicted a Tory member of the European Parliament²³. Although British and French cinemas made rather a similar number of films focusing on the political world, it has to be remembered that the percentage of output was much smaller in France since this country produced on average 150 films per year whereas Britain only released around 50 films per year in the 1980s. Therefore, the level of preoccupation with socio-political context appears much higher in British cinema than in French cinema during this decade.

1 - The personal in French films versus the metonymic in British films

A noticeable difference between the two national cinemas was that in French films the love story was foregrounded with the political issue as the second layer of the narration, whereas in British films questions of ethics in relation to the political world constituted the main storyline with the presence of an affair as a subplot. Therefore, the world described in French films focused on the personal over the professional. In *Le Bon plaisir* (1983), Claire (Catherine Deneuve) loses a compromising letter involving the President of the Republic (Jean-Louis Trintignant) after her handbag was snatched. The eleven-year-old letter from the President refers to his decision not to admit that he is the father of Claire's unborn child in order to save his public image as a respectful husband and to pursue his political career. The incident allows the former lovers to meet again and the story reflects the changing attitude of the President towards paternity and the growing importance of Claire in his life. Unlike the

President's wife (Claude Winter) presented as a broken woman (she is lying on her bed in tears while a low-angle shot of the President towering above her enhances his superiority), Claire is perceived as the President's intellectual equal. Despite the luxurious settings associated with the President's function (his spacious study, his palace first seen in aerial shots), it is Claire who dominates the space. Particularly remarkable is a scene at the President's palace where Claire and her son are associated with the outdoor space while the President is confined to indoor space. Besides, his limp forces him to a slow pace while signalling his vulnerability. This scene reveals that through the image of a diminished President temporarily losing control of the situation, it is a reassessment of personal life versus the importance of power which is the point of the episode. Through the President's disillusioned point of view, *Le Bon plaisir* illustrates how his thirst for power has not only destroyed his personal life but has also denied the happiness of family life either to his wife or his lover and son. A similar narrative treatment is given to the life of the Socialist Secretary of State for Education Antoine Lombard (Sami Frey) in *L'Etat de grâce* (1986). The focus of this comedy concerns his surprising infatuation with right-wing entrepreneur Florence Vannier-Buchet (Nicole Garcia). In common with *Le Bon plaisir*, *L'Etat de grâce* is predominantly interested in the personal life of a member of the government. But unlike the President, Antoine Lombard does not wait until it is too late to give priority to his personal life. Released the same year, *Etats d'âme* deals with five men in their thirties and the way they experience the arrival of the Socialist Party in power. Gathered on 10th May 1981 at Bastille to celebrate Mitterrand's victory, they encounter Marie (Sandrine Dumas) who gives birth on that symbolic evening. Each man then in turn has a short-lived love story with Marie. One of them, Maurice (Robin Renucci), a Green sociologist who is offered a post as Secretary within the Ministry of Industry by the recently appointed government, marries her, only to be left by Marie shortly afterwards in order to let him be looked after by his over-possessive mother. In

Le Quatrième pouvoir (1985), Nicole Garcia plays the role of a powerful woman as Catherine Carré, a star television news presenter who, after discovering that the government is involved in an illicit nuclear affair, is encouraged by a former lover (who is also a newspaper journalist) to unveil this piece of information. Once more, this film focuses on the personal story while the political element occupies a less important place. In the aforementioned British films, not only is the political context far more prominent, but the love story which fuels the French films is replaced by a more sordid brief affair. Thus, in *Paris by Night* (1988), Clara Paige (Charlotte Rampling) is a Conservative Member of the European Parliament whose priority in life is clearly her political career. Married to Gerald (Michael Gambon), an alcoholic MP in Westminster, and the mother of a ten-year-old boy, Clara is sent to Paris by the Foreign Secretary and has an affair with a young English designer called Wallace Sharp (Iain Glen) whom she meets by chance. But whether she is filmed as a public figure or in a more intimate situation, Clara remains strongly associated to Conservative rigidity.



Paris by Night: Conservative M.P. Clara Paige (Charlotte Rampling)

Ironically, after spending the first night with her, Wallace makes direct allusion to her function instead of her own self by telling her 'you're my first naked Tory'. In *Giro City*, Sophie (Glenda Jackson) is equally perceived through her function as a television film director working on current affairs programmes rather than a complete human being. As a link

between political issues and the public, Sophie would like to take advantage of her position as a journalist to denounce the illegal procedures enjoyed by politicians. Prevented to do so by her television director, she is asked to assist reporter O'Mally (Jon Finch). The whole film insists on the professionalism of the two journalists in their desire to refer to governmental action while, as noted by Combs (1982b, 293), 'sex is pointedly excluded' between them. As for Nick Mullen (Gabriel Byrne) in *Defence of the Realm* (1985), his life is dedicated to his professional career as a reporter for a Fleet Street tabloid. The political scandal involving Dennis Markham (Ian Bannen), a prominent opposition MP, leads the reporter to discover the accidental murder of a young boy by the Secret Services in order to avoid a nuclear catastrophe. Emerging only at the end of the story, the burgeoning love affair between Mullen and Nina Beckman (Greta Scacchi), Markham's former secretary, concludes itself in the death of the two protagonists in the bombing of his flat. Even more bitter is the treatment given to the failed affair between BBC journalist James Penfield (Jonathan Pryce) and television researcher Susan Barrington (Charlie Dore) in *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983). Although James's interest in Susan could be perceived as the main narrative thread, what the film is actually concerned with is the ethics of people close to political power, against the background of Susan's continuous negation of James's infatuation.

2 - Genre and style

A major discrepancy between the French and the British films mentioned above concerns genre as French films were mostly comedies whereas British ones were hybrids between social realism and the political thriller. Naturally, the presence of these two genres engendered the use of different stylistic devices. With the exception of the Mocky film *Une nuit à l'Assemblée nationale* which was a popular comedy, these French films were often described as comedies *à la française* (even if *Le Quatrième pouvoir* (1985) verges towards the crime

film). What is understood here by the term *à la française* is a type of comedy of manners working with restrained comic codes, romance, and a certain degree of naturalism, and the features of middle-budget mainstream cinema (with stars and good production values). As such, the presence of actresses such as Catherine Deneuve and Nicole Garcia and actors like Jean Louis Trintignant, Michel Serrault, Robin Renucci and Philippe Noiret, generally associated with the seriousness of *auteur* films, contribute to an image of a 'quality' cinema thanks to their distant elegance and mastered elocution. By contrast, British films opted for a colder appearance with the performance of Charlotte Rampling, Glenda Jackson, Jonathan Price and Gabriel Byrne underlining a certain aloofness through restrained body language. The choice of settings is also an element which helps constructing romance in the French films (a week-end in Florence in *L'Etat de grâce* (1986), the presidential palace in *Le Bon plaisir* (1983), a trip to Brittany in *Le Quatrième pouvoir* (1985)) as well as the wedding ceremony in *Etats d'âme* (1986)). In the British films, London as the capital city symbolises a cold world where calculated power replaces human feelings. Any attempt to leave the capital city proves disastrous: Clara Paige is guilty of murder in Paris (*Paris by Night*, 1988), James Penfield has to face the mother's intrusion into his bed in Norfolk (*The Ploughman's Lunch*, 1983) and Sophie's report about corrupted politicians in Wales is rejected (*Giro City*, 1982). As for the soundtrack, the silent or repetitive threatening soundtrack of British films gives way to recurrent entertaining melodies in French films. In terms of *mise en scène*, this impression is confirmed by either the use of empty space filmed in long shots (*The Ploughman's Lunch* and *Giro City*) or the *film noir* atmosphere of certain scenes with the use of expressionist lighting (*Defence of the Realm*, *Paris by Night*). By contrast, the French films insist on close and medium shots and broad daylight.

3 - Political life

Although all these films include in their narratives government representatives, one may wonder what sort of information they provide about people at the top and contemporary issues. The reaction of the press when reviewing these films was to consider that they presented a lack of political comment in the French cases and an efficient way of referring to governmental issues in the British cases. Contrasting with the more directly politicised cinema of the 1960s and 1970s where political incidents and figures were clearly represented²⁴, French cinema of the 1980s either expressed a desire to talk about political power in a more abstract form or failed to convince film critics that the film included a political comment on its contemporary era. Thus, journalist Françoise Giroud, the scriptwriter of *Le Bon plaisir* (1983), explained that she 'wanted to show how power influences men' (Loiseau 1984) and that '*Le Bon plaisir* does not depict — as everyone knows — any particular people' (Murat 1984)²⁵. This deliberate rejection of precise examples in favour of a more general approach was also adopted in *Le Quatrième pouvoir* (1985); director Serge Leroy claimed that 'the aim of the film is not to point out scandals but to offer a reflection on power' (Arbaudie 1985, 8)²⁶. By contrast, *L'Etat de grâce* (1986) and *Etats d'âme* (1986) were comedies grounded in the political context of the first years into power of the Socialist Party. These two films referred to a precise moment, as '*L'Etat de grâce*' was a journalistic expression indicating the first years of the Left in power when it was still benefiting from the clemency of its electorate — *L'Etat de grâce* indeed covers the first five years of the Socialist Party in power (1981-86). However, film critics unanimously noted the weakness of these two films in terms of producing any genuine political comment, writing for example that in *L'Etat de grâce* 'Social reality is only used as a background for a sentimental romance' (Rocher 1987, 60), and that 'the authors have grounded their plot in a context which only provides the illusion of a political discourse' (Chevassu 1987, 40); while it was said that in *Etats d'âme*,

'Mitterrand is real but the Secretary of State is false' (Chevrie 1986, 59). While the specialized press considered that these French films failed to deliver a political account of the 1980s, British cinema provided films whose directors' aim to depict the political sphere of the time was received positively by film critics. Conceived by its director David Drury as a film 'about power, secrecy, expediency and which shows contemporary British society right across the spectrum' (Robinson 1986, 11), *Defence of the Realm* (1985) was praised for showing on screen 'a number of uncomfortable and disturbing issues' (Petley 1985, 338). A similar motivation to tackle the political agenda caused the director of *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983) to shoot its penultimate scene in Brighton at the Conservative Party Conference, an element which contributed to the way the film was perceived by the press as successfully sketching governmental issues (Brown 1983, XI, Decaux 1984, 45, Elsaesser 1983, 165). As for *Paris by Night's* director David Hare, his attempt to counterbalance the fact that 'it is one of the greatest mysteries of Thatcherism that it has generated so little fiction' (Hare 1988, vii) was also praised by critics (Petley 1989, 212, Pym 1989b, 134).

Such a clear cut attitude adopted by film critics about the French and British films under discussion here calls for a new examination in the light of my comparative study. One possible explanation justifying the discrepancy in the way the French and British films were perceived concerns thematic treatment. Does the audience learn more about British than French political issues in these films? Most of these films were made by filmmakers and scriptwriters who share a first hand experience of the media world²⁷. Their earlier careers show a knowledge and an interest in the contemporary world equally present in French and British films and, as Dehée (2000, 154) points out, 'political power is the favourite subject of journalists turned film directors'. The points of view adopted were either that of a member of the government or of a journalist, and they were generally presented as antagonistic. These films were based on the power game opposing the government and the press and in order to

do so, they presented the events either on the press side (*Le Quatrième pouvoir*, *Giro City*, *The Ploughman's Lunch*, *Defence of the Realm*, Michel (Xavier Deluc) in *Etats d'âme*) or the governmental one (*Le Bon plaisir*, *L'Etat de grâce*²⁸, Maurice (Robin Renucci) in *Etats d'âme*, *Paris by Night*).

Both French and British films present a number of contemporary issues: the nuclear question (*Defence of the Realm*, *Etats d'âme*²⁹, *The Ploughman's Lunch*), secret services (*Defence of the Realm*, *Le Quatrième pouvoir*), education (*Etat de grâce*, *Etats d'âme*), the Falklands war (*The Ploughman's Lunch*³⁰), free radio stations (*Etats d'âme*), the IRA (*Giro City*) and European policies (*Paris by Night*, *Etats d'âme*). These films participate in the construction of a certain 'image of reality' with the use of press cuttings, newsreels, radio and television extracts and the inclusion of the head of State either on television, at a Party Conference or in a frame in the Minister's office. The naming of actual events such as the Falklands war, Greenham Common, the 1982 Conservative Party Conference, M15 on the British side and the result of Mitterrand's election on television, the Elysée Palace, the reform of Education, free radio stations on the French side, also contribute to the idea of films about the real political world. Yet, there was an obvious limitation in the exploration of these events and the films went no further than mentioning this information. John Hill's (1999a, 144) comment about *The Ploughman's Lunch* that 'the action of the film is constantly punctuated by the use of radio voice-overs and TV screens' can also be applied to *Defence of the Realm*, *Giro City* and *Le Quatrième pouvoir*. All these elements contribute to make political power visible. As expressed by Judith Williamson (1993, 158) 'Power is a difficult thing to visualize. Partly because it is not, in fact, a thing but an operation, a relationship; very hard to 'see', though certainly felt, its invisibility is easily confused with secrecy'. Therefore, what really made a difference in the way the two groups of films were perceived by the press did not lie in their political contents but in questions of genre and *mise en scène*. As previously mentioned, the

British films were a hybrid genre crossing political thriller and social realism whereas the French films were mostly comedies. Thus, British films provided a cold and calculated world as the background of political power which helped create an appearance of seriousness and credibility frequently associated with a masculine environment. By contrast, the comic element of the French films played down the political comment. To illustrate this point, the encounter between journalist Nick Mullen (Gabriel Byrne) and three unidentified men supposed to represent the power of the state in *Defence of the Realm* and the presentation by Antoine Lombard (Sami Frey), the Secretary of State in charge of universities, of his new agenda in *L'Etat de grâce* constitute striking examples in their filmic treatments of people in power.

In *Defence of the Realm*, the encounter is preceded by Mullen's night journey to an unknown place after being kidnapped, followed by a track shot forward along a dark and narrow corridor. After waiting in silence, the staged encounter finally takes place in a dimly-lit room between Mullen and the three anonymous men working for the Secret Services. The desk-lamps are visually powerful in creating an expressionist lighting which reinforces the threatening atmosphere. The rigidity and expressionless faces of the three respectable middle-aged men in black suits are contrasted by the constant shot reverse shot on Mullen's puzzled face. Sitting in line, the three men on one side and Mullen on the other give the impression of a tribunal and this *mise en scène* is pursued with a static shot of the three men disappearing behind the doors. The menacing soundtrack then carries on until Mullen is abandoned in a back alley. By contrast, the introduction of a member of the government in the opening scene of *L'Etat de grâce*, which takes place during a conference of employers about the professional training provided by the state education system, contrasts dramatically with the above British film. The tone is immediately set by the entertaining melody on the soundtrack and the gentle provocation by the employers who open their newspapers while the Secretary of State talks.

Even if Antoine Lombard (he is immediately introduced and therefore there is no question of anonymity in his case) also wears a black suit and has the allure of respectability, the smile on his face and his body language contribute to his accessible image. Indeed, the star persona of Samy Frey is generally associated with the articulate and good-looking intellectual. After his presentation, Florence Vannier-Buchet (Nicole Garcia) expresses her (and her colleagues') ideological antagonism by saying 'You represent everything that I despise', followed by a cut to a long scene where Florence and Antoine make love, have a shower and get ready for work. This shift from professional to personal life is somehow essential to the representation of power in the four French films under discussion here. The image of power provided by the British films only includes the professional side of the protagonists and only a happy few are entitled to witness it, hence cutting the people in power away from the reality of the man in the street. Even in *Paris by Night*, Conservative Member of the European Parliament Clara Paige (Charlotte Rampling) never drops her role as a politician. For instance, her visit to her son at hospital underlines the same efficiency that she shows towards her professional duties. This depiction of British Members of government therefore produces dedicated but one-dimensional characters only associated with their function. By contrast, the emphasis is given to the personal side of the French politicians. Thus, Maurice (Robin Renucci) in *Etats d'âme* is looked after by his possessive mother, the President (Jean-Louis Trintignant) in *Le Bon plaisir* discovers the joy of paternity and Antoine Lombard is filmed within his family in a scene of rural domestic bliss. In the local café situated in his parents' village, Antoine's function is not indicated by his behaviour but simply by the patrons' curiosity. In fact, the shot of Antoine and his family having a drink, with a poster of the Socialist Party's electoral campaign in the background, is the only one which reminds us of his function.



L'Etat de grâce: Antoine Lombard (Samy Frey) surrounded by his parents in their local café.

By providing more information about members of the government, French films favour the personal over the professional and thus tend to wipe out the characters' official position by turning them into average citizens. While the anonymity of the characters in the British films allowed a generalisation from a particular character to the political world as a whole, in French cinema the focus on personality tended to a de-politicisation of the context. As such, in French films there was a shift in the 1980s from establishing the characters according to their functions to analysing their personalities in order to understand why they reach such a prestigious position. For instance, the President's successful career in *Le Bon plaisir* is perceived through the personal sacrifices which he has imposed on himself, his wife and his lover. By contrast, in *Paris by Night* Clara Page illustrates the consequences of her professional experience as a female MP on her personal life (her affair during a meeting in Paris, her marriage to a conservative MP).

4 - Values of French and British politicians

In 1980s British cinema, politicians were visually associated with a dark and functional world, thus offering the image of a calculating world. This impression was conveyed by a focus on their professional activities while their personal life was rarely unveiled. By contrast,

the values usually praised in 1980s French films were personal happiness and integrity while condemning the thirst for money and power. In *Defence of the Realm* and *Paris by Night*, the politicians are guilty of murder which they refuse to uncover. While the need to protect the government's public image is given by the politicians as an excuse for their decision, the narrative heavily condemns the politicians' attitude. What enhances the idea of a calculating world associated with people in power is the complete absence of guilt of the murderers. In *Paris by Night*, Clara's dual personality is fully revealed during the night scene when she shows no sign of remorse after throwing her enemy, Michael (Andrew Ray), over the bridge. As soon as Clara identifies Michael on the bridge, a close shot of her face underlines her determination before she expertly pushes him into the Seine river. Half-lit by the street lamp, Clara's angular face remains expressionless after Michael's drowning while the lighting insists on her double personality as a strong-willed politician and an impassive murderer. A later scene recalls this one by showing Clara's half-lit face when she meets Michael's widow. Similarly, in *Defence of the Realm* the three men working for the Civil Service explain without remorse to Mullen that they did not have any choice about the murder of an innocent young boy, then killing Mullen afterwards in order to preserve the state secret. Lying is justified by genre in *Paris by Night* and *Defence of the Realm* since 'the British political thriller of the 1980s is particularly concerned to uncover what is going on inside the 'secret state' and to make visible what the authorities would prefer to keep hidden' (Hill 1999b, 149). By becoming a threat to the population, the state and its representatives are given a rather negative image. In fact, the British films focus on a series of anti-heroes whose lives end up in death or back to square one. Mullen and Clara Paige end up in violent death, the former is blown up in his flat while the latter is shot at point-blank range by her husband. The main protagonists' thirst for self-achievement turn them into despicable creatures, hence contributing to a sarcastic and bitter image of their contemporary society.

Indeed, an important element contributing to this image of British society is the contrast between the man's world associated with the British films and the feminisation of what used to be a man-only territory in French films. Therefore a pan shot of the press room in *Defence of the Realm* shows that the only woman allowed in this room is the secretary where the rest of the personnel are men only. As for Clara Paige's professional life in *Paris by Night*, it is associated with panel cabinets and comfortable meeting rooms, the privilege of men until not so long ago, and it is clear that her presence is tolerated because of her manly behaviour and dress code. Nothing of the sort is found when Claire (Catherine Deneuve) in *Le Bon plaisir*, Florence (Nicole Garcia) in *L'Etat de grâce* and Marie (Sandrine Dumas) in *Etats d'âme* visit the cabinet of a member of the government. Moving freely around the cabinet, the women highlight the contrast between the rigidity of the timeless place and their liveliness. This 'feminisation' of the official sphere is ironically pushed forward when the President in *Le Bon plaisir* opens a parcel containing baby clothes on his presidential desk. The feminisation of the political world in French films echoes François Mitterrand's discourse in favour of more equality between men and women. More strikingly, the presence of Edith Cresson as Minister in the 1980s (and Prime Minister from May 1991 to April 1992) illustrated this effort for the feminisation of the political sphere under the Mitterrand government. In contrast, the masculinisation of the political world in British films corroborated the public image of Margaret Thatcher (nicknamed 'The iron Lady') as a politician whose way of ruling over Britain was associated with very masculine and energetic methods.

Although the happy ending of *Etats d'âme* and *L'Etat de grâce* is expected in the comedy genre, the evolution of the main characters follows an interesting pattern before the conclusion. As always in comedies, routine is broken by an unusual event (here the election of the Socialist Party) until everything goes back to normal. Young, good-looking and educated, Antoine Lombard and the five men of *Etats d'âme* are presented as a sample of 'ideal' left-

wing militants who will confront their ideals to the reality of power. The 'authenticity' of their characters is confirmed when they refuse to adhere to a government whose values they do not share anymore. Indeed, these two films are the filmic equivalent of the *bildungsroman*, moving from innocence to awareness. Yet, here awareness reflects disillusion and loss of utopia, combined with a stronger faith in love and friendship. The medium shot of Antoine and Florence sitting on the doorstep of Antoine's family house with the entertaining melody of the beginning can be read as a return to childhood as the ultimate recipe for happiness. Similarly in *Etats d'âme*, the five men rejoin the world of childhood by being turned into the fictional characters of Marie's cartoon. Because these protagonists are praised for their human qualities, their disapproval of the Socialist policy raises two possible interpretations. Because of its inexperience in power the Socialist Party had to adjust its ideals to the reality of the situation, thus meeting the inevitable anger of its 'out of touch with reality' members. The second interpretation is that by encouraging the sympathy of the audience towards the disapproving protagonists, *Etats d'âme* and *L'Etat de grâce* condemn the position of the government.

In conclusion, although emphasis is put on the dedication of politicians in British films whereas French films reveal an interest in the moment when politicians change their priorities from their professional to their personal lives, the two national cinemas largely fail to provide precise information about contemporary political issues. In that respect, British cinema manages to convince the audience that it does provide information through a metonymic relation — a characteristic of the realist tradition — in which the characters' individual destinies represent the collective destiny of the nation. On another level, what British films provide is the illustration of a certain public paranoia triggered by the attitude of the government. These films highlight the erosion of civil liberties imposed by members of the

government on the British population by insisting on the importance of secrecy and betrayal within the government.

II - STATE INSTITUTIONS

Decisions taken by the state influence the way a society evolves through its institutions. Among these institutions, four general fields are commonly outlined by sociologists (McLennan, Held and Hall eds. 1984, Abercrombie and Warde eds. 1988, Galland and Lemel eds. 2001) and social historians (Marwick 1996): law and order, the welfare state through education and health, family and work. Bearing in mind these four pillars of society, this section analyses how French and British cinemas of the 1980s represented the role played by these institutions on screen. However, due to important changes both on screen and in reality, the treatment of family and work deserves a substantial part of this study and will therefore be analysed in the next two chapters.

French and British cinemas made a similar choice concerning the representation of the state by concentrating on law and order (highly encouraged by the commercial success of crime films) while other institutions like education and health were given a more episodic attention. The following section then start with the representation of education and health before tackling to a greater extent crime films.

1 - Education and health

Writing in *The Sunday Times* about how Mrs Thatcher during her third term in office confirmed egalitarian ideas as unattractive by praising private provision and individual choices instead, journalist Olivia Letwin (1987, 12) explains that 'it has taken [Mrs Thatcher] a long time to attack the education service and the NHS — because education and health were the holy lands of the egalitarian crusade. She started with much easier targets'. By being able

to opt out of governmental authority, British schools and hospitals underwent major structural changes in the 1980s³¹. As for France, it was frequently referred to as 'the teachers' Republic' by the media because the French political landscape was marked in 1981 by the massive sudden presence of (former) teachers or lecturers who constituted one third of government members. The various reforms of education that followed caused an immediate reaction among the population with, for instance, the 'loi Devaquet' in 1986, while decisions made about social security passed unnoticed. Such political and social preoccupations were echoed in films with direct references in British cinema to the state of the National Health Service by recognised British filmmakers such as Lindsay Anderson (*Britannia Hospital*, 1982) and David Hare (*Strapless*, 1988). Unsurprisingly given the generous French health coverage, their militant approach towards the state of health provision was totally absent from French films which only showed hospitals either to refer to the protagonists' health (*L'Amour nu* (Yannick Bellon, 1981), *Sauve toi Lola* (Michel Drach, 1986)) or as a professional background (*Femmes de personne* (Christopher Frank, 1984), *Maladie d'amour* (Jacques Deray, 1987)). As for school/university-based films, although the theme of education has engendered some high profile films both in British cinema (*The Browning Version* (Anthony Asquith, 1951), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (Ronald Neame, 1969), *If...* (Lindsay Anderson, 1968)) and in French cinema (*Zéro de Conduite* (Jean Vigo, 1933), *Les Risques du métier* (André Cayatte, 1967)), the 1980s witnessed a noticeable discrepancy between the two national productions in terms of box-office results and thematic approach. Thus, despite academics' anger after Thatcher's decision to severely cut university funding, higher education was rarely given a predominant role in 1980s British cinema³² and as such *Educating Rita* stood apart in British cinema (Hinton 1994, 100-2). In fact, with the exception of *Educating Rita* (Lewis Gilbert, 1983) starring Michael Caine and Julie Walters and *Clockwise* (Christopher Morahan, 1985) whose success leaned on the popularity of John Cleese, films

like *Heavenly Pursuits* (Charles Gormley, 1986) with Tom Conti and Helen Mirren and *Wetherby* (David Hare, 1985) with Vanessa Redgrave gained only a limited commercial success. On the other hand, 1980s French cinema produced highly successful mainstream films like *Le Maître d'école* (Claude Berri, 1981) seen by 3.1 million of spectators, *P.R.O.F.S.* (Patrick Schulmann, 1985) by 2.8 million of spectators and *L'Etudiante* (Claude Pinoteau, 1988) by 1.5 million as well as reasonably successful *auteur* films such as *Une semaine de vacances* (Bertrand Tavernier, 1980) with 952 000 spectators, *Cours privé* (Pierre Granier-Deferre, 1986) with 572 000 spectators, and *Noce blanche* with 1.8 million (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 1989).

The idea that 'late 40s and 50s comedies offer a critique of British institutions, institutions which serve as microcosms of British society as a whole' (Street 1997, 64) was still valid in British 1980s cinema³³. Indeed, both Lindsay Anderson and David Hare presented their visions of Britain through a trilogy, concentrated on the 1980s in Hare's case and spread over three decades in Anderson's with the character of Mick Travis (Malcolm McDowell) as a pupil, a young man who has just left school and a reporter. These two satirical trilogies offered a picture of society in general in *O Lucky Man* (Anderson, 1973) and *Paris by Night* (Hare, 1988), school in *If...* (Anderson, 1968) and *Wetherby* (Hare, 1985) and hospital in *Britannia Hospital* (Anderson, 1982) and *Strapless* (Hare, 1988). *Strapless* is the story of thirty-year-old Lilian (Blair Brown) and twenty-year-old Amy (Bridget Fonda), two American sisters living in London whose personal lives encounter a crisis — respectively through a failed marriage and an unexpected pregnancy — before reaching a happy end resolution. Counterbalancing the romantic melodrama format is the crisis of the NHS which Lilian, working in a large London hospital as a radiotherapist, directly experiences through her basic income ('I'm a National Health doctor. I've nothing left'), the redundancy of her colleague Colin (Hugh Laurie) and the pressure put on her to lead the strike against governmental cuts.

Within this hospital described in the script as 'an NHS hospital stretched to the very limit, more like a railway station on a bank holiday' (Hare 1989, 8), the quick pace of the film is suddenly stopped by a narrative pause enabling a meeting where Dr Cooper (Alan Howard), the most senior doctor, explains that 'we have to face a period of almost infinite contraction' and as a result 'people will find themselves not reappointed. Nobody's job is safe anymore'. Through the intervention of Dr Cooper, David Hare criticises the government for the collapsing state of the NHS in a manner which somehow leaves the audience with the impression of being lectured. More central to the narration, the state of the NHS is depicted through the comedy genre in *Britannia Hospital* which Anderson justifies as a commercial choice³⁴. After receiving a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1982 (Auty 1982, 205), the film was either positively assessed as 'a caustic attack on virtually every aspect of British social and political life' (Hackner and Price 1991, 40) or condemned as 'a catalogue of frustration rather than a film' (Auty 1982, 205). In Anderson's trilogy, seen in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* as 'a continuing update on the state of the nation' (Combs 1982a, 105), the choice of the NHS during the 1980s from a director with a profound 'distrust for institutions' (Hackner and Price 1991, 28) was an attack on the financial priorities of the government. In that respect, the opening scene of *Britannia Hospital* is crammed with information, but unfortunately the film does not sufficiently develop the ideas contained in its opening. The film opens on a long shot of a Victorian building accompanied by a version of 'Rule Britannia' on the soundtrack, an oral image of old prestigious England rapidly denied by the next shot of trade-union workers picketing outside the building, now identified as a hospital. The arrival of an ambulance stopped by the workers on strike sets the comedy tone by the requirement to see the medical certificate of a dying old man. The high-angle static shots comment on the service provided by the NHS: staff smoking, drinking coffee, playing cards and going for their tea break while delaying the terminal patient's admission and an off-

duty nurse who 'couldn't care less' about the dying patient. The black comedy effect is achieved with the contrast between the sound of 'Rule Britannia' rising to a crescendo and the old man dying alone at reception. Although this scene convincingly denounces the inefficiency of the NHS, it does so by condemning collectively the trade-union members, the selfish nurse and the incompetent admission staff. The allegorical ambition of the film to show Britain in terminal collapse is undermined by 'the film's emphasis on union obduracy and industrial disruption [which] add credence to Conservative demands to curb union power' (Hill 1999a, 141). The remaining impression is that both *Strapless* and *Britannia Hospital* miss their goals since they do not in the end criticize the governmental policy towards the NHS but tend to put the blame on the members of the institution for their lack of organisation and efficiency.

Also written and directed by David Hare a few years before *Strapless* (1988), *Wetherby* (1985) opens during a dinner-party taking place in a cottage where Yorkshire schoolteacher Jean Travers (Vanessa Redgrave) has invited friends for dinner. Arriving at the same time John Morgan (Tim McInnery), a complete stranger, manages to seduce Jean, makes love to her and comes back the following day to commit suicide in front of her. In common with Hare's *Strapless* and *Paris by Night*, the film is based on an enigmatic story while providing a political comment on 1980s society. Hare insists on the importance of class in British society, which strongly influence the characters' relationship both in terms of personal and social repression. In a scene similar to Dr. Cooper's intervention in *Strapless*, the momentum of the dinner-party is interrupted by one of the guests' point of view of the Thatcher government, which gives a similar lecturing effect. As for the scenes in the classroom, their aim is to remind the audience that the school staff is under constant threat of unemployment. The two most popular British films referring to education in the 1980s were comedies: *Educating Rita* and *Clockwise* which respectively scored 7th in 1984 and 8th in 1986 at the UK Top Twenty.

These two films criticised the British education system as belonging to a stifling world out of touch with realities. *Clockwise* (1985) sells Britishness to the American market (the film was essentially financed by US money) thanks to the 'larger than life' image of Brian Stimpson (John Cleese) as the 'typically British' Headmaster of a Gloucestershire comprehensive school as well as the usual paraphernalia of 'Britain for foreigner' (the mini, the red telephone box, the school uniform). In the final scene whose unusual length (9 minutes) contrasts with the fast pace of the film, Brian Stimpson arrives to give a speech at the Headmasters' Annual Conference. As Brian walks towards the camera with the musical soundtrack adding to the ceremonial effect of the scene, his grotesque appearance (he swapped his smart outfit for white loafers, an oversized pair of trousers and a tight jacket after a series of unfortunate incidents) is first perceived through the shocked yet repressed reaction of the assembly made of old men all clad in black suits and white shirts. Within the refined décor of the wood-panelled room, Brian is presented as an intruder and the high-angle shots of him signal his apprehension. As late comers keep interrupting him, Brian loses his patience (and the sleeve of his jacket) and his declamatory voice sounds more and more preposterous, until he leaves the room to be arrested by the police. Made in a farcical way, what is introduced as a historic moment — when the headmaster of a comprehensive school becomes the chairman of an assembly of public-school headmasters — ends with the impossibility of this intruder to become one of them. But thanks to the star persona of John Cleese (in the tradition of *The Monty Python* and *Faulty Towers*), the audience is made to laugh at the series of misunderstandings while condemning the stifling world of public schools. Similarly, *Educating Rita* offers a strong criticism of the higher education system by condemning the rigidity of the institution. At the time, the critical reception of the film was more enthusiastic in Britain than in France where, for instance, *Positif* saw a quaint comedy (Ciment 1984, 68), *Les Cahiers du cinéma* underlined the inertia of the plot (Chevrie 1984, 55) and *Télérama*

considered it as a good TV film (Salachas 1984). Set in the context of the Open university, *Educating Rita* is about the encounter of middle-aged and disillusioned Dr Frank Bryan (Michael Caine) and Rita (Julie Walters), a young hairdresser who decides to study. Although Frank and Rita are poles apart in relation to their age, their social background and their occupation, their humanity makes them stand apart from both students and academics at the university. Underneath the main comic device which is based on their differences, Frank and Rita are two oddities within the university. During the credits, the tracking shot of Frank dwarfed by the size of the buildings gives a sense of imprisonment. Tolerant and honest (indicated by his name), Frank is a poet turned alcoholic because of his thirst for spontaneity and liberty which was refused to him by the constraints of the university. Rejected by his wife, faced with the hypocrisy of his colleagues, Frank is finally sent to Australia like a pariah. Because most of the film is perceived through Frank's point of view, it projects a cynical portrayal of British higher education.

By contrast, French films offered a very different picture of the education system. Although all 1980s French films insisted on the dedication of teachers, the mainstream films (*Le Bahut va craquer*, *Le Maître d'école*, *P.R.O.F.S.*, *L'Etudiante*) offered an idealised picture of the egalitarian role played by the institution, whereas the *auteur* films (*Une semaine de vacances*, *De bruit et de fureur*, *Cours privé*, *Noce blanche*) depicted the moment of doubt experienced by teachers towards their profession. In mainstream films, the idea of an elitist system was largely ignored and the emphasis was put on the racial and social mixity of French schools. *Le Maître d'école* is punctuated by brief scenes in the classroom where the primary school teacher Gérard (the comic star Coluche) discusses issues such as the death penalty and unemployment with the pupils. During these debates, the camera isolates close shots of the children's faces (carefully selecting the spectrum of ethnic colouring, from black to white via *beur* faces) while Gérard inquires about their parents' professions (ranging from unemployed,

to butcher and mayor) as well as their familial situation (the lone mother, the divorcing parents, step siblings...). Even if this technique lacks subtlety, it highlights the various backgrounds of the pupils in the same class, and thus the idea of equality of opportunity for every French pupil through the Republican education system.

Another notion conveyed by mainstream cinema in relation to teachers was that they contributed to the cohesion of French society. Presented as a large family (they visit each other after school, share flats, eat together at home), this community of teachers rapidly integrate 'outsiders'. In *L'Etudiante*, a recurrent scene shows teachers (visually identified by their books and glasses) having a ritualistic evening meal with their flatmates (a nurse, a musician). In *auteur* films, it was the teachers' responsibility towards society which was examined. In *Une semaine de vacances*, the young French teacher Laurence Cuers (Nathalie Baye) finds herself unable to go to school one morning and is prescribed a week off work. Through a succession of short flashbacks, Laurence meditates over her role as a teacher, which contrasts strongly with the down-to-earth attitude of her partner (G rard Lanvin), a property developer. The film opens with a close shot of a curtain being drawn by Laurence's hand. Then a shot through the window reveals an old woman sitting by herself in the opposite block of flats (she will later die by herself and Laurence will feel guilty for ignoring her loneliness). The soundtrack consists of political comments on the radio about the current economic situation and the rise of unemployment. After following Laurence into the darkness of her bedroom, the camera shows her reflection in the mirror as she brushes her hair, while her voiceover recalls a conversation during which she described her pupils' disillusion to a colleague. Here the soundtrack works on two level. First it allows the audience access to the political climate and Laurence's inner thoughts. Second, it links the general situation in France to Laurence's personal situation, thus highlighting the role of teachers within the social fabric. As for Brisseau's two films, they insist on the sexual ambiguity of the teacher-pupil

relationship, through the idealist vision of a young female teacher (Fabienne Babe) in *De bruit et de fureur* and the Lolita personality of a new pupil (Vanessa Paradis) in relation to a middle-aged male teacher in *Noce blanche*. A particularly interesting scene in *De bruit et de fureur* happens two thirds into the film. Moved by the loneliness and kindness of one of her pupils called Bruno, the young teacher accepts to show him how to dance. Unaware that they are being observed by the headmaster, they are filmed in medium shot with the camera lingering suggestively over their bodies. Followed by a point-of-view shot from the doorframe where the headmaster is, the depth-of-field enhanced by rows of empty seats in the foreground and the two dancers in the background underlines the incongruity of their situation in this empty room. Suspected of illicit behaviour, the young teacher is required to adopt a more distant attitude despite Bruno's social distress.

Despite the avowed aim of British directors to rehabilitate the values of the welfare state and to denounce the governmental measures taken in the 1980s, films such as *Britannia Hospital*, *Strapless* and *Wetherby* eventually demonstrated that the inefficiency of the archaic system was not only due to lack of finance but also to the negative attitude of the employees. Their lack of enthusiasm towards work as well as their more general disillusion thus appear to corroborate the government's decision to transform the welfare state into a more challenging enterprise. Thus, films whose intention was to deliver a harsh criticism of the government paradoxically illustrated the need for change. In fact, a more stringent criticism of the rigidity of public institutions was found in the popular comedies *Clockwise* and *Educating Rita* which established complicity between the main protagonists (popular stars John Cleese, Michael Caine and Julie Walters) and the audience, while condemning the stasis of these institutions. French cinema, on the other hand, offered an idealised view of an egalitarian system. Contrary to the consensual vision of the mainstream films, fostered by popular stars such as Coluche and Sophie Marceau, *auteur* films stressed the perhaps equally utopian desire of teachers to

change society, although ultimately they show the impossibility of this desire, whether in a traditional format (Tavernier) or a sexualised vision (Brisseau).

2 - Law and order

In British society the 1980s represented a decade marked by conflicts with extremely tense industrial relationships: the closure of the coal-mines and trade-union strikes reached their climax in 1984-85 (Marwick 1996, 332-43, Crick 1985, 128-54) and violent racial riots broke out in Brixton and Southall (London), Toxteth (Liverpool), Handsworth (Birmingham), Bristol and Manchester (Solomos 1993, 147-79, Hall 1996, 163-72). After the riots which took place in Brixton in 1981, an official enquiry was commissioned by the government. The report blamed the police for its over-reaction to the disorder, and reform was strongly advised (Scarman 1981, 46-99). The image of the police force changed as the media frequently denounced how protesters were illegally assaulted during these conflicts. In the 1980s, the revelation of corruption and violence changed the image of the police in Britain. A series of events gradually undermined confidence in the police throughout the country (Sked and Cook 1990, 353-7), even more so within the ethnic communities, where lack of trust towards the police was widespread (Mason 2000, 111-6). By contrast, for a while the French government enjoyed the clemency of its electorate during its first couple of years in power, but then this was followed gradually by disenchantment, especially among the younger generation. The revelation of spreading corruption among politicians and what was perceived as a laissez-faire policy towards law and order damaged the credibility of the police force and the authority of the state altogether. Despite the increasing number of local policemen throughout the 1980s, insecurity due to delinquency and petty theft further damaged the image of the police force (Roché 1998, 267-72).

In terms of film representation, the importance of law and order in French and British cinemas can be seen both in terms of the number of films produced within the crime genre and of popularity at the box-office. Naturally, crime films did not suddenly appear in the 1980s but continued a deeply-anchored tradition since the early days of cinema, but which developed especially in the post-war period (Guérif 1981, Philippe 1996 and Chibnall and Murphy eds. 1999). In the 1980s, the crime film in Britain and in France experienced a certain blurring of boundaries: the traditional generic patterns of the police/gangster film blended with elements belonging to other genres — for instance comedy in *Les Ripoux* (Claude Zidi, 1984) and the European art film in *The Long Good Friday* (John Mackenzie, 1981). Film critics and scholars largely agree that these films became increasingly involved in depicting certain aspects of contemporary society. For instance John Hill (1999b, 160) notes that 'British gangster films of the 1980s display a determination to be more than 'just thrillers' by combining gangster story-lines with a degree of social and political commentary' while Charles Tesson (1985, 117) writes in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* that 'with the progressive disappearance of left-wing fiction, the French *policier* referred to various social issues' by including political elements into the background. 1980s French crime films insisted on corruption and petty theft at every level of society while largely putting the blame on the immigrant communities. In British films, the emphasis was put on the fin-de-siècle feeling with the loss of ideology.

As we have already noted, the quantity of films produced during the decade in each country plays an important role, with an average of fifty films per year in Britain and one hundred and fifty in France. Thus, there is a limited number of films referring to the gangster world in British cinema and film scholars usually agree on the following as constituting the main corpus: *The Long Good Friday* (John Mackenzie, 1981), *The Hit* (Stephen Frears, 1984), *Mona Lisa* (Neil Jordan, 1986), *Empire State* (Ron Peck, 1987), *Stormy Monday* (Mike

Figgis, 1987) and *A Prayer for the Dying* (Mike Hodges, 1988). In order to analyse law and order in British films, to this list focusing on the underworld should be added films illustrating the relationship of ethnic minorities with the police such as *Babylon* (Franco Rosso, 1980), *Burning an Illusion* (Menelik Shabazz, 1981) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1987). In French cinema, as Olivier Philippe (1996, 19) explains, the production of *policiers* remained relatively stable during the 1980s because of its status as a 'safe' genre in terms of box-office results, and around a quarter of the overall production in the 1980s were crime films (Marshall 1992, 33). In addition to its commercial success, the crime film was rewarded by the trade in the 1980s with the *César* for Best Film given to *La Balance* (Bob Swain, 1982) in 1983 and *Les Ripoux* (Claude Zidi, 1984) in 1985 while during the decade Claude Brasseur (*La Guerre des polices*), Michel Serreau (*Garde à vue*), Philippe Léotard (*La Balance*), Coluche (*Tchao Pantin*) and Nathalie Baye (*La Balance*) each received a *César* for Best Actor/Actress. These films also did well in terms of box-office results with 5.8 million spectators for *Les Ripoux*, 4.1 million for *La Balance* and 3.8 million for *Tchao Pantin*.

Because around 300 French crime films were produced in the 1980s, selecting a sample has proved difficult. However, during that period the crime film can be categorized under three types of films mixing the *policier* with another genre: comedy (*Inspecteur la bavure*, *Circulez y a rien à voir*, *Les Ripoux*, *Pinot Simple Flic*, *Les Keufs* and the *gendarmes* series still going), mainstream (*La Balance*, *La Crime*, *Le Marginal*, *Pour la peau d'un flic*) and *auteur* films. It has frequently been noted that in the 1980s *auteurs* were keen on directing *policiers* and films like *Péril en la demeure* and *Le Paltoquet* (Michel Deville, 1985 and 1986), *Garde à vue* and *Mortelle randonnée* (Claude Miller, 1981 and 1982), *Tchao Pantin* (Claude Berri, 1983), *Vivement Dimanche* (François Truffaut, 1983), *La Garce* (Christine Pascal, 1984), *Poulet au vinaigre* and *Inspecteur Lavardin* (Claude Chabrol, 1985 and 1986), *Police* (Maurice Pialat, 1985) and *Detective* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1985) were perceived as hybrids crossing auteurism

with the *policier*. In order to illustrate the representation of law and order in French cinema, examples will be taken from films belonging to the three categories aforementioned with a focus on *Les Ripoux* and *La Balance* due to their commercial and professional popularity (*Les Ripoux* is the second most popular film of the 1980s behind *Trois hommes et un couffin*), on *Tchao Pantin* because of the media and critical debates which it generated, and on *Police* for the extremely laudatory critiques it received in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* ('the film's extraordinary talent to survey its reality is unique in contemporary French cinema', Toubiana 1985, 13) and *Positif* ('one of the most beautiful films of contemporary cinema', Amiel 1985, 3) as well as important scholarly material.

2.1 - The gangster and the policeman

In British films of the 1980s, gangsters adopt the old-fashioned respectability of the three piece suit found in 1940s American *films noirs* (Bob Hoskins and Michael Caine at the beginning of *Mona Lisa*, Sting in *Stormy Monday* and Bob Hoskins in *The Long Good Friday*). But this fascination for the American gangster is mixed with an equal fascination for old England symbolised by the Jaguar that Bob Hoskins drives in *Mona Lisa* and *The Long Good Friday* ('a proud British car, built before the invention of Maltese pimps or heroin or child sex' notes John Pym 1986, 286), the black Cab and the red telephone box in the background. As for the French policeman, the stereotype of the trench-coat is progressively replaced by what Olivier Philippe (1996, 52) calls a 'chameleon' aspect, enabling the policeman to see without being seen. Hence, the professional card which reveals the professional identity of the protagonist works as a leitmotiv, confirming the power of the policeman. In *Les Ripoux*, François's (Thierry Lhermitte) sartorial change from the conventional black suit to a leather jacket and a pair of cowboy boots symbolises his change of mind from being an exemplary policeman to becoming a 'ripoux' (backslang for rotten, i.e.

corrupt). In the scene where Inspector Boisrond (Philippe Noiret) takes François to a seedy shop, the *mise en scène* insists on numerous identical items of clothing and the exiguity of the place. By buying his clothes in this shop, François indicates his desire to blend in with the way people dress in the working-class area where he works. The street scene that follows allows the audience to see François's new anonymity in the crowd. In the 1980s French films, although the policeman and the gangster belong to two opposite camps, their representation shares a number of similarities: as Inspector Mangin (Gérard Depardieu) says to Noria (Sophie Marceau) in *Police*: 'People say often enough that cops and gangsters are the same'. At work, what contributes to give an aura to the gangster/policeman is his or her belonging to a group. Their profession may place them above the average citizen, but they also rule supreme over the rest of the group. In *The Long Good Friday*, Bob Hoskins's speeches (on the boat, in the swimming pool, in the abattoir) are filmed in static shots as if the world has stopped to listen to him. And in *Mona Lisa*, Michael Caine's authority over Bob Hoskins is conveyed by his imposing build contrasting with Hoskins's small and plump figure. In French films, within the confined space of the police station, the camera follows Gérard Depardieu in *Police* and Richard Berry in *La Balance* as they give orders. Crime films underline the importance of a hierarchical order (even if this order is increasingly at stake) based on a series of rituals, which frequently lead to verbal exchanges being reduced to a minimum. This authoritarian attitude frequently works against them in their personal lives where communication with the woman they love cannot be established without a preliminary scene of physical and verbal violence: Gérard Depardieu slapping Sophie Marceau in the face (*Police*), Bob Hoskins slapping Cathy Tyson (*Mona Lisa*), Coluche telling Agnès Soral to 'fuck off' (*Tchao Pantin*) and Bob Hoskins throwing Helen Mirren on the sofa (*The Long Good Friday*). All these scenes follow a similar pattern of men not knowing how to keep control of the conversation with intelligent women (significantly when Bob Hoskins violently

throws Helen Mirren on the sofa, what he actually says is 'I'm talking to you'). But this violence reflects an evolution within gender relationships as these scenes are followed by a more 'traditional' pattern of tearful women being comforted by men (this change in gender relationship will be analysed on a larger scale in the chapter on the family). As such, many of the French and British crime films of the 1980s construct a world undergoing major change, in which policemen and gangsters alike find it hard to adapt.

2.2 - The immigrant community

To provide a vicarious knowledge of immigrant communities, French and British films include a large amount of outdoor scenes in which white gangsters and policemen are used as guides through the multi-ethnic urban cityscape. It is worth noting that in French crime films 'what does get introduced into this landscape as a new signifier of Frenchness is the drug underworld almost always associated with an Arab 'community" (Hayward 1993a, 291), whereas British gangster films focus on the capitalist world (often symbolised by London's docklands³⁵) and give little attention to ethnic communities. In what philosopher Jacques Rancière (1985, 107) calls the 'new social tourism of French cinema', the Parisian quarters with a high proportion of immigrants such as Belleville (*La Balance*, *Tchao Pantin* and *Police*) and La Goutte d'Or (*Les Ripoux*) are used as the background for the new popular realism. Because male members of these ethnic communities are frequently depicted as drug dealers, many film critics felt the necessity to deny any invidious links that could be made between the police, racism, and the immigrants. For instance, the newspaper *Libération* wrote about *Police*³⁶ that 'If all the Arabs in the film are effectively drug dealers, it is never said that they are the only dealers or that all Arabs are crooks' (Lefort 1985), while it was said in the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité* that in *Tchao Pantin* 'there is an important proportion of immigrants and in the film all the drug dealers and drug addicts are Arabs. Yet it would be a

mistake to see a racist comment from the author' (Le Morvan 1983). The ambiguity of the depiction of Arab characters in the 1980s crime films works against the notion of a tolerant and welcoming French society and therefore a parallel can be drawn with clichés about racism found in films focusing on the ethnic communities (*Black Mic Mac*, *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir*, *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède*). Positioning themselves against the official discourse of integration put forward by the Socialist Party, crime films tended to stigmatise Arabs as evil characters fighting against an all-white police force. In *Tchao Pantin*, it is only when police inspector Lambert (Coluche) has resigned that he becomes friend with small time Arab crook Bensoussan (Richard Anconina). Indeed, *Tchao Pantin* is built on a contrast between the police and the Arab community on one side and police inspector Lambert and Bensoussan on the other. The racist attitude prevailing while one group is perceived by the other one (the police versus the Arab community) is finally denied when two representants (Lambert and Bensousan) of these groups meet, thus moving from an anonymous to a personal relationship. As was often the case in the 1980s, counter-stereotypes came from the work of an ex-*café-théâtre* comedian, Josiane Balasko. Her film *Les Keufs* (1987) offered an unusual representation of the police, figured by a woman (Balasko herself) and a black man (Isaac de Bankolé). The first person to be arrested in the film is Isaac de Bankolé and mistaken identities will be a recurrent source of comedy. At the police station, the close shot of Balasko's face when realising her mistake, then the reverse shot of de Bankolé enjoying his victory underline an unusual situation for her, as well as pointing out that he is used to this mistake — witnessed in the background by the other policemen looking at them through the window. As the film develops, its focus on the efficiency of the black policeman and his female colleague, as opposed to the clumsiness of the other policemen, works as a denunciation of an all-white male police force.

By contrast, British crime films did not present the immigrant communities as the cause of social problems but as the victims of the white male crook. Thus, in the opening scene of *Mona Lisa*, George (Bob Hoskins) cannot believe that 'the neighbourhood has been colonised by West Indians' (Pym 1986, 286) during his seven years in prison (incredulous, he asks his friend Thomas (Robbie Coltrane) 'Where did these people come from?'). After George's wife slams the door in his face, close shots of his physical violence in the foreground contrast with the silent crowd of West Indians witnessing their quarrel. George's racism is expressed in the way he first kicks a dustbin (the litter on the pavement being a visual metaphor of George's scorn towards black people) before grabbing an innocent black man. Then, as George and Thomas walk down the street, the camera slowly tracks them backward in order to record George's contemptuous look at the new dwellers. This scene recalls Hoskins's similar racist attitude in *The Long Good Friday* where he "abuses a young black boy working in a garage in Brixton before commenting on the changes within the area ('This used to be a nice street. No scum'). Here a parallel with films made by ethnic directors/scriptwriters also shows the immigrant as a victim. Even if the young black people are involved in small illegal business in *Babylon* (Franco Rosso, 1980), *Burning an Illusion* (Menelik Shabazz, 1981) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1987), the unfair behaviour of the police towards them is more prominent. In the opening scene of *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* an innocent black woman is shot at point-blank range by a white policeman in uniform. Yet the editing inscribes the murder as a banal event by a jump cut into the next scene which reveals a close shot of the tattooed bottom of Sammy's mistress. Moreover, the uniform worn by the policeman makes him anonymous by insisting on his function rather than his person. Stephen Frears and Hanif Kureishi were voluntary provocative in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* by presenting this murder as just another event among the black community. As for *Burning an Illusion* and *Babylon*, they were respectively reviewed as focusing 'on ordinary life in the black community, rather

than making that community an inevitable focus for crisis and drama' (Roddick on *Burning an Illusion* 1982, 299) and 'another depressing but easily consumable slice of life' (Jenkins on *Babylon* 1980, 209). In my opinion, these two films denounce the abnormality of the unfair treatment of the black protagonists as the victims of racism by the population (who insult them) and the police (who arrest them). Contrary to French crime films which tended to depict negatively the ethnic community, the aforementioned British films presented the immigrants as the victims of racism.

2.3 - Fin de siècle

On a comparative level, what characterises French and British crime films of the decade is the idea of disillusion in a society where both policemen and gangsters have lost faith in their set roles. On the screen, this feeling of disillusion was transcribed in the more 'realist' films by a focus on the personal over the professional together with the malaise afflicting men at the turn of the century. This notion was frequently pointed up by film critics at the time who, for instance, associated *Tchao Pantin* with the idea of despair: 'this film is above all a story about despair' (Le Morvan 1983), 'it is a film about absolute despair' (Leclère 1983) and 'Lambert drags along his life of desperation' (Pascaud 1983). Similarly, Etcheverry (2000, 64) writes that 'the popularity of British crime drama is strongly linked to this craze for a lost past'. During the final scene of *The Long Good Friday*, Harold (Bob Hoskins) goes to the Savoy hotel with the hope of concluding a deal with the American Mafia boss Charlie (Eddie Constantine). The high-angle shot of Harold walking on the black and white draughtboard appearance of the floor has turned him into a pawn. The aim of the film is not to deal with the intricacy of the gangster world anymore but with Harold's inability to adapt to the new world (Harold says: 'This is a crazy world. What is going on?'). In the evolution of this genre, the intrigue turned into a pretext for the study of human behaviour and in particular gender.

Hence film director Neil Jordan declared that *Mona Lisa* was 'a film about men and how they imagine women' (Codelli 1986, 64) and Maurice Pialat explained that he 'wanted to make a film about a cop who would be more like a genuine cop. Gérard never wanted to'³⁷ (Ciment and Sineux 1985, 10). Indeed, society was seen through the point of view of the male protagonist out of touch with his surrounding world. Olivier Philippe (1996, 237) writes about French crime films that 'the disillusioned hero' is a type of policeman created in the 1980s. This portrait of the disillusioned hero was equally found in French and British crime films, in which, against a background of corruption and despair, the anti-hero became the most interesting protagonist. In both national cinemas this feature was equally noticed by film critics who considered that in *Tchao Pantin* 'Lambert remains the archetype of the anti-hero' (Ostria 1984, 48) and 'a loser' (Parra 1984a, 17), in *Mona Lisa* George is a 'gangster and a loser' (Toubiana 1986, 27) while Maurice Pialat explained that 'only negative heroes are praised' (Pascaud 1985). In *Mona Lisa* the close shot of George wearing star-shaped sunglasses on the Brighton Pier gives him the appearance of a sad clown for whom the show is over. In addition to his ordinary appearance previously noted, the anti-hero was often constructed against an empty personal life: Lambert (*Tchao Pantin*) has been abandoned by his wife, Inspector Mangin (*Police*) and Inspector Boisrond (*Les Ripoux*) are widowers and George's wife refuses to let him in after his release from prison. As for their professional lives, the police needs to adjust to a more flexible society while the gangsters have to accept that there is no code of honour anymore. Through the recurrent references to a world of disillusion and with the help of the anti-hero figure, these films constructed a cinema turned towards the 'good old past', a feature occasionally underlined by film critics who considered that 'the nostalgia of the early cinema seems to haunt contemporary French cinema' (Goldschmidt 1984, 53) while in British cinema 'criminality is associated with acknowledging the end of an era' (Etcheverry 2000, 63). This *fin-de-siècle* nostalgia, perceived through the

eyes of men losing confidence — first in themselves and then in their society — was present both in French and British crime films of the 1980s. Consequently, these films turned towards an idealised vision of the past have encouraged various comparisons to earlier genres ranging from 1940s American gangster films (*Mona Lisa*, *Stormy Monday* and *The Long Good Friday*) to 1970s *cinéma-vérité* (*Police*) and poetic realism (*Tchao Pantin*). A general tendency in French and British crime films of the 1980s was to position themselves at a crossroad between a nostalgic past and a still-to-be-discovered looming future in a world where corruption of the law and inefficiency among the gangsters rule supreme. Unlike the bulk of French films produced in the 1980s, the crime film was a genre which offered more pessimistic vision of contemporary society, in particular with the depiction of ethnic minorities.

III - INDIVIDUALS

1 - Portraying a group of individuals

In this section, I have made a selection of French and British films in which a group of individuals stands for a microcosm of society. What motivates my choice of films is the allegorical value of the characters. Therefore, the films selected depict characters whose income and profession are varied enough to offer a significant sample of 'specimens'. Additionally, my selection is composed of films that have been reviewed systematically in terms of the director's attempt to provide a miniature representation of his/her contemporary society. As a result, *Escalier C* (Jean-Charles Tacchella, 1984) and *Etats d'âme* (Jacques Fansten, 1986) on the French side and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1987) and *High Hopes* (Mike Leigh, 1988) on the British side emerge as a particularly eloquent sample for comparison. Following the election of the Socialist Party in 1981, *Etats d'âme* (already discussed in this chapter) focuses on the disillusion of a group of five men whose activities

range from setting up a free radio station to becoming a member of the government. *Escalier C* deals with the inhabitants of a Parisian block of flats: an unemployed man, a teacher, an art critic, a failed writer, a fashion designer and a secretary. *High Hopes* is centred around an old woman, her working-class son, her nouveau riche daughter and her middle-class neighbours. And *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* includes a wide variety of social types, connected through Sammy (an accountant) and Rosie (a social worker). The following press reviews illustrate a consensus among film critics who unanimously considered these films as representing a microcosm of their contemporary society. Thus, the five men of *Etats d'âme* 'provide a sample of French society' (Chevrie 1986, 59), 'each represent a particular aspect of left-wing politics' (Mardore 1986) while Alion (1986, 39) believed that Fansten's ambition was to provide 'emblematic figures representing 1981 in the way that *La Belle Equipe*³⁸ symbolised 1936'. In *Escalier C*, the eponymous staircase was seen by Jean-Pierre Jeancolas (1985, 112) for its sociological value as 'the ideal sociological staircase [...] situated in an old block of flats in Paris'; Jean-Charles Tacchella 'depicted the complete microcosm of an 1980s tribe' (Leclère 1985a) in this 'contemporary story' (Skorecki 1985b). Similarly, *High Hopes* dealt with 'how a militant filmmaker sees contemporary British society' (Godard 1989) because Mike Leigh was interested in 'developing characters whose behaviour helps capture a 'microcosm of society' (Quart and Quart 1989, 56). Similarly, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* presented a 'microcosm of England' (Malcolm 1988, 13) by 'mingling and embracing the lives of some specimens in London' and talked about 'today's individual' (Jousse 1988, 8) through a 'messy kaleidoscope' (Pérez 1988).

Through a series of vignettes focusing on individuals in their thirties performed by actors at an early stage of their careers, these films adopt the tone of bittersweet comedies (although more bitter in the British films through the influence of social realism and sweet in the French ones which cultivate the tradition of comedies *à la française*). This generic discrepancy is

paralleled by stylistic differences: seamless editing, the pleasant visual background of central Paris and the reassuring feeling that the natural order of things will be re-established at the end, in the French films, whereas in the British films, deep focus, much more varied locations and the personal misery of some of the characters project a harsher reality.

A major difference between the portrayal of the different groups is the focus on people belonging respectively to 'the centre' in the French films and 'the margins' in the British films. In *Etats d'âme* and *Escalier C*, the central roles are allocated to good-looking, educated and well-off characters working in trendy 1980s fields such as the media and art: Michel (Xavier Deluc) is a television journalist and Bertrand (Tcheky Karyo) has created one of the first free radio station in *Etats d'âme*, while Forster (Robin Renucci) is an art critic, Konrad (Jacques Weber) is a painter and Claude (Jacques Bonnaffé) is a fashion designer in *Escalier C*. By contrast, *High Hopes* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* provide a large number of characters presented as marginal either in economic terms for Shirley (Ruth Sheen) and Cyril (Philip Davis) who refuse to adopt the 'yuppie' values in *High Hopes*, or in relation to ethnicity for Danny (Roland Gift) and Sammy (Ayub Khan Din) and sexuality (the lesbian couple) in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. As Jean-Loup Bourget (1988, 66) wrote in *Positif*, in *Sammy and Rosie* 'all the characters are marginal'.

The representation of characters as belonging to the centre or to the margin is worth noting as it reflects a general tendency of 1980s French and British films, but what is more telling about the state of society in each country is the second layer of the story which refers to the internal dynamic within the groups of people. *Etats d'âme*, *Escalier C*, *High Hopes* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* are all about a group of people and yet the following definition of a 'film about a group' given by Jeancolas (1986, 114) fits the two French films: it has 'a limited number of protagonists, sharing sentimental or ideological experiences. Various events and behaviours take place during a similar period of time for all the protagonists. It implies the presence of

shared experiences'. The definition also corresponds to the five left-wing men of *Etats d'âme* who have met each other at school where their friendship was sealed by their photograph on the cover of the weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* (as a group of students during May '68) and the young inhabitants of *Escalier C* whose *mise en scène* shows them spending more time in the staircase than in their flat while a common monthly meal reinforces the link between them. The personal evolution of the characters, their mutual interaction as well as their continuous flow of conversation which fill their everyday life are strongly influenced by the location. More than half a century ago, Paul Cohen-Portheim (1935, 93) was comparing London and Paris by writing that 'there are different ways of being happy. A Parisian would think life in a London suburb hopelessly dull, and would much rather put up with a dark and overcrowded small flat and keep the life of the street and cafés; thus every city expresses the ideals of its people'. This depiction fits the interaction taking place in *Escalier C*. The inhabitants of this block of flats are not presented as separate entities but as a group of people living together under the same roof. This impression is conveyed by the fact that half of the film takes place in the enclosed setting and that conversations started in the staircase usually end in one of these flats. What reinforces even more the notion of group is the type of interaction taking place between them. The film contrasts the life of one of the characters, Forster, outside, a life characterized by superficiality and the world of appearances (people parading at exhibitions, his sexual encounters based only on physical seduction, his role as a cold and scornful art critic), with life inside the block of flats which is built on strong ties. Hence, the fashion designer falls in love with Forster, the teacher's daughter wants Forster to become her father and the unemployed man starts a love story with the teacher. Their relationship is not only based on verbal but also on physical contacts. In the scene when Forster has a tetanus attack, the ambiguity of his relationship with the homosexual fashion designer Claude (Jacques Bonnaffé) is first of all triggered by Forster holding Claude in his

arms. Then, when Forster's body is aching with pain, the high-angle shots of him lying on his bed while Claude holds him tightly cultivate the ambiguity by hiding their faces behind Claude's hair. Claude's gestures towards Forster are those of a lover (stroking his hair, embracing him). In *High Hopes*, by contrast, Mrs Bender's (Edna Doré) birthday party is not enough to bring the various protagonists together. The privilege of the working-class characters, namely Mrs Bender, Cyril (Philip Davis) and Shirley (Ruth Sheen), is to be able to have genuine communication whereas true physical and verbal communication is denied to the other protagonists. When Valerie (Heather Tobias) visits her mother, a static camera shows the back of the armchair on which Mrs Bender is sitting, hence drawing the audience's attention to Valerie looking at herself in the mirror before throwing her present on her mother's lap, and then kissing and stroking her dog. Although mother and daughter are in the same room, the camera underlines the absence of physical contact by concentrating on Valerie first, then stopping on Mrs Bender's face, thus avoiding to show the two protagonists simultaneously. What supersedes the notion of group in this film is the notion of class (which will be developed in the next section). As for *Sammy and Rosie*, this idea of individuals living a parallel existence next to one another is efficiently transcribed thanks to rapid cutting, overlapping dialogues, swish pans and screen splitting in a society where there is no time for human feelings. Whereas the French films value friendship and a close knit community, the British films could be seen as 'a patchwork' (Ramasse 1989, 13 on *High Hopes*). The patchwork metaphor of extremely small units living side by side is taken further in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* in which *Sammy and Rosie* was perceived as giving the image of a social fabric disintegrating because 'there is the idea of something falling apart, that is to say something impossible to sew together, where the different units do not fit together, where patches do not hold together' (Jousse 1988, 8). Indeed, the concept of integration in France versus multiculturalism in Britain can be transferred from the immigrant communities to the

entire society in terms of representation within the national cinemas. In the 1980s French cinema insisted on the interaction of its citizens while British cinema underlined characters living side by side.

The key element illustrating these different approaches, as is often the case, is the success or failure of sexual relationships which serve as a yardstick to measure success. The impossibility of a satisfying sex life in the two British films reflects a problematic communication between individuals. If 'recreational sex is the thread which unifies the episodes of *High Hopes*' (Pym 1989a, 10), the film reveals that the more financially successful the protagonists are, the less they are entitled to a satisfying sex life. As such, the preposterous sexual games of Rupert and Laetitia in the staircase and the lack of sex between Valerie and Martin are in stark contrast with the genuine feelings involved in Shirley and Cyril's love making. In fact, the white and anonymous staircase in which Rupert and Laetitia perform their role play is opposed to Shirley and Cyril's bedroom. Here the close shot of Cyril and Shirley shows them cuddling in bed while talking and laughing, and the bike poster and passport photograph of the two of them emphasize the feeling that this is a place of their own. Like the characters in *Sammy and Rosie*, they all over-indulge in their sex lives as 'contact is triggered by sex' (Jousse 1988, 8), even if the drawback of this sexual freedom is described by Stephen Frears as 'putting Sammy and Rosie's relationship at stake because they have put their feelings aside' (Siclier 1988). The famous 'sandwich' scene encapsulates this perfectly by showing through an horizontal split screen three couples simultaneously having sex while the similar mechanical rhythm puts the emphasis on the act over the feelings. The idea of fragmentation is enhanced by the audience's awareness that sex here is not linked with love since the older couple know that it is too late for them to start a love story and that it simply corresponds to an affair for the younger couples. Sex here is the celebration of a missed love story and of infidelity. To a lesser extent, *Etats d'âme* and *Escalier C* also picture the inability

of the characters to create their desired long term relationship. Thus, in *Etats d'âme* the five men live a passionate love story (and a wedding in Maurice's case) with Marie (Sandrine Dumas), the incarnation of the perfect woman, but none of them is able to make it stable. Impossible love is also evoked throughout *Escalier C* but the happy ending of the film comes with Forster's moral realisation that one needs to give in order to fulfil his or her life. Although genuine human relationships prove equally difficult to maintain in *High Hopes* and *Sammy and Rosie* as it is in *Etats d'âme* and *Escalier C*, British films put the emphasis on the fragmentation of a society where 'indifference is the greatest sadness' (Sweet 1988, 21) whereas French films portray a more convivial society.

2 - Class

The growing polarisation of Britain under the Thatcher government with the development of the entrepreneurial spirit on the one hand and the rise of unemployment and precarious labour on the other hand, increased the sense of a two-tier society. Yet, equally opposed to the traditional aristocracy and the traditional working class, Margaret Thatcher 'was determined to drive the language of class — and the idea of class conflict — off the agenda of public discussion, and this was something she very successfully accomplished' (Cannadine 2000, 175) thanks to a calculated rhetoric erasing the word 'class' from her speeches. In fact, she coined the expression 'classless society', a phrase largely used by her successor John Major. Even if a Marxist approach to class in Britain has become more problematic because of the shift from collective producers to individual consumers, 'it is to be blind to evidence all around of the enduring power of the English sense of class-divisions' (Hoggart 1995, 199). However, the notion of class evolved in the 1980s towards the study of material circumstances which influenced people's life-chances and their sense of identity. In 1980s France, sociologists noticed that a growing part of the population considered that it belonged

to the 'classe moyenne' (ranging between the lower middle class and the middle class in Britain) while in 1987 only half of the French workers considered themselves as belonging to a particular social class (Dirn 1990, 61-3). Since the traditional definition of class is no longer easily applicable to either country, what becomes predominant instead, in terms of a possible categorization of the population, is the idea of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1979).

In 1980s cinema, the same discrepancy exists between the celluloid projection of a class conscious British society and a 'classless' French society. Class is so deeply-rooted within British culture that realism is a genre associated with a specific social class (Hill 1986, 127-44) as 'Film history[...] demonstrates that realism in British cinema has marked class boundaries. The notion that realist films could embrace characters of the upper-middle class and beyond has rarely been considered' (Brown 1997, 189). Moreover, the tendency of Anglo-American film critics was to reinforce the notion of class in Britain while French film critics ignored it. Writing in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* about *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (1988) and *Romuald et Juliette* (1989), Iannis Katsahnias (1987b, 17) referred to 'the division of the world in two opposite groups' and Frédérique Sabouraud (1988, 61) argues that in *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* 'the world is divided between the Groseille and the Le Quesnoy families'. By contrast, for Anglo-American film critics *La Vie* depicts 'a slobbish working-class family' (Elley 1989, 49), in *Educating Rita* the eponymous character wants to leave her 'working-class ghetto' (Johnson 1983, 130), *High Hopes* shows a series of 'working-class characters' (Pym 1989a, 10) and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* is 'a respectable study of working-class lives' (Doyle 1987, 38). In addition, French film critics tended to favour profession or appearance over social class when discussing characters. In *Educating Rita*, Rita is 'a dynamic and straightforward hairdresser' (Chevrie 1984, 55), concerning Shirley and Cyril in *High Hopes* 'he is a courier, she works as a gardener in parks' (Clech 1989, 57) and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* is 'the story of two fat girls' (Sabouraud 1987, 64).

1980s French cinema was also able to play down the notion of class because the social background of the actor/actress was not as obvious as it was in British cinema. Taking the example of Gérard Depardieu (*Je vous aime* (1980), *Police* (1985), *Rive droite, rive gauche* (1984), *Trop belle pour toi* (1989)), Bill Marshall (1987, 239) rightly argues that Depardieu illustrates the idea of democracy and meritocracy: 'If Depardieu emerges from the provincial working class, his transformation is not in relation to them, either as contradiction or as drawing upon a collective identity'. The possibility to erase the belonging to a specific social class was not unusual in 1980s French cinema: Richard Anconina (*Tchao Pantin* (1983), *Paroles et musique* (1984), *Police* (1985)) and Sandrine Bonnaire (*A nos amours* (1983), *Police* (1985), *Sans toit ni loi* (1985), *Quelques jours avec moi* (1987)) confirm this tendency as their strong working-class origins did not prevent them from playing various social types of characters. By contrast, British actors/actresses were generally associated with a precise social class with, for instance, Bob Hoskins and Julie Walters playing working-class characters while Vanessa Redgrave and John Cleese being associated with middle-class ones. As Sarah Street explains (1997, 146), the specificity of British stardom is that, although it suggests that the possibility to become a star is linked to a democratic ideal, 'the British class system [...] would nevertheless keep you in your place'. Exceptions were rare among British actors/actresses in the 1980s but did exist with, for instance, Daniel Day-Lewis as a punk in *My Beautiful Laundrette* and as an aristocrat in *A Room with a View*. As sociologist Richard Hoggart (1995, 199) explains, even at the end of the twentieth century British people are still 'branded on the tongue'. Whereas accents play an essential part in categorizing British people, in France only people belonging to the two ends of the social spectrum have a specific accent (or regional accents which are not related to class). In 1980s French and British cinemas accents worked differently. British films dealing with social exclusion and working-class people were faithful in transcribing the way people actually talked. The hiring of non-

professional actors, as in *Looks and Smiles* (1981) and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987), contributed to this *effet de réel*. Furthermore, attempting to lose a working-class accent produced preposterous (though intriguingly only female) characters like Valerie in *High Hopes*, Michelle in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* or Rita in *Educating Rita*. Accent was rarely highlighted in 1980s French cinema and on the contrary French films tended to subdue this characteristic which contributed to the impression of 'classless' characters.

3 - Narration

In terms of narrative, what the French cinema of the 1980s frequently employed was a linking scenario where the central role was attributed to a go-between who made possible 'the straightforward juxtaposition of two opposite worlds which are gathered in the same film' (Katsahnis 1987, 17). This linking scenario made it possible for people from different backgrounds and incomes to bridge the gap whereas in British films people belonging to different social classes usually ignored one another. Commonly found in 1980s French cinema, the role of the go-between as a link between people belonging to the two ends of the social spectrum was mostly attributed to men and children: François (Gérard Lanvin) in *Marche à l'ombre* (1984), Mangin (Gérard Depardieu) and Lambert (Richard Anconina) in *Police* (1985), Michel (Jacques Villeret) in *Black Mic Mac* (1986), Romuald (Daniel Auteuil) in *Romuald et Juliette* (1989), Hippo (Hippolite Girardot) in *Un monde sans pitié* (1989), Charlotte (Charlotte Gainsbourg) in *L'Effrontée* (1985) and Maurice (Benoît Magimel) in *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (1988). With the exception of *Police*, these films are comedies where the go-between moves between extremely contrasted characters who mostly belong to opposed social groups. In *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*, the link between the well-off Le Quesnoy and the unemployed Groseille families is made by Maurice who manages to fit into these two worlds by taking advantage of his 'dual social class' (after a baby

swapping is revealed twelve years later, Maurice learns that his family is not the Groseilles but the Le Quesnoys). Being alternatively called Maurice or Momo, his real name and his nickname, represents two aspects of his personality. Maurice sounds like a traditional but old fashioned name which is perfect to be integrated in the Le Quesnoy family while Momo corresponds to its working-class nickname. It is therefore not surprising that at the end of the film, he introduces himself to a policeman as Le Quesnoy-Groseille. Maurice is equally at ease in both social groups and he makes it possible for children of both families to meet. The fact that there is no narrative ellipse when Maurice walks from one family to the other underlines a continuity in his life. Maurice quickly establishes a desire among the two groups of children to see what the other family looks like. In a scene when the Le Quesnoy parents try to open Bernadette's door, a close up of Maurice shows his half-lit face, an indication of his split personality. Although the Groseilles and Le Quesnoy parents simply ignore each other except for the exchange of their mutual offspring, social differences do not seem to prevent the children of both families from mutual understanding. They are equally eager to discover either physical pleasures or forbidden substances: drinking beer and sniffing glue put the children on the same level by showing a similar attraction to alcohol and 'drugs'. In *Marche à l'Ombre*, François (Gérard Lanvin) and Denis (Michel Blanc) are presented as two happy-go-lucky young men arriving in Paris with no money and nowhere to live. However, shortly after, François meets professional dancer Mathilde (Sophie Duez) who invites him back to her spacious flat. A parallel editing between François in Mathilde's flat and Denis sleeping in the foyer of the squalid hotel shows François's ability to exist in very different spheres. Likewise, *Un monde sans pitié* is centred around Hippo (Hippolite Girardot), a character who refuses to belong to any social class in particular. His friendship with unemployed Alpern (Yvan Attal) and the working-class man who sells *L'Humanité* is counterbalanced by his relationship with middle-class Nathalie (Mireille Perrier).

What helps Maurice, Hippo and François to fit into different worlds is their charisma together with their awareness that clothes play a major role in identifying personal status within French society. The scene where Maurice stops on his way to the Groseilles to make his hair look scruffy and unbutton his shirt conveys his awareness that a specific dress code contributes to his integration in both families.



La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille: From middle-class to working-class appearance:
Maurice (Benoit Magimel) unbuttoning his shirt.

His new and expensive satchel signals a middle-class child but its content (silver stolen from his biological family) proves that Maurice belongs to both social classes. In fact, the scene by the canal reveals that social classes almost disappear among the youngest children from both families as their swimming trunks make the dress code invalid. In *Marche à l'ombre*, François is accepted by people belonging to different social classes because his sporty clothes and his pair of boxing shoes are not specifically connoted.

Finally, because go-between characters like Maurice, François and Hippo are clever and articulate, it helps them feel at ease within various situations thanks to their 'above average' personalities. It is the association of charisma and cleverness which enables the go-between to bridge the gap with a love story. Apart from the child go-between (Maurice in *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* and Charlotte in *L'Effrontée*), in all the films previously quoted based on the 'linking scenario', love triggers the encounter of opposite worlds even if these love

stories do not always last. At the end, François (*Marche à l'Ombre*) looks for his loved ones in the streets of New York, Hippo (*Un monde sans pitié*) is ignored by Nathalie at the airport and Mangin (*Police*) is left by Noria (Sophie Marceau). But in these cases, the ending is more related to a stereotypical discourse of Parisian lovers' doomed love than to the idea of class. As for *Black Mic Mac* and *Romuald et Juliette*, the happy ending of these two utopian comedies celebrates as much class as ethnic diversity.

By contrast, the poor and the well-off rarely mingled in British cinema of the 1980s. Mutual disdain and an acute sense of class were present in numerous 1980s British films such as *Educating Rita* (1983), *Meantime* (1983), *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983), *A Letter to Brezhnev* (1985), *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987), *High Hopes* (1988) and *Vroom* (1988) to quote but only a few films. *High Hopes* demonstrates how in London, the tendency to 'residential segregation' (Abercrombie and Warde eds. 1988, 112) — that is to say that households within a similar income bracket tend to cluster in the same area — largely spread during the 1980s with the selling of council flats to private owners and a continuous gentrification (Smith 1987, 151-72).



High Hopes: Behind the motorbike, Mrs Bender's house (the last one of the street owned by the council).

A long static shot of the house of seventy-year-old Mrs Bender reveals that it is the only house in the street which has not been renovated in this recently gentrified area of London (as Shirley explains: 'I bet your Mum is the only council tenant').

Then, a succession of shot reverse shots of Cyril's and Shirley's eyes peeping through the letterbox of Mrs Bender's affluent neighbours shows gratuitous shots of the dark corridor and anonymous living room. These shots contrast Cyril and Shirley's freedom with the stifled and confined world of the middle class illustrated by the neighbours' house. Later in the film, a second long static shot on the street shows Mrs Bender being locked out of her house. While the old woman requires help from her well-off neighbour, the railing between the two entrances serves as a 'frontier' between the two social worlds and low-angle shots of Laetitia convey her feeling of superiority whereas Mrs Bender is filmed in high-angle shots. A similar device is used in *Educating Rita* as Rita is too embarrassed by her social background to go to her tutor's party. As Rita walks towards Frank's house in the dark, the railing in the foreground reveals Rita's sense of estrangement. The tracking shot is interrupted by low-angle shots of the house's brightly-lit windows to show how impressive and glamorous the 'other' world is. Unable to walk up the stairs, Rita feels trapped, a feeling expressed visually by the reflection of the railing on her chest, as if she could not move anymore. She then disappears in the dark going back to her local pub. The aforementioned films, whether strongly political or intended as entertaining comedies, contributed to representing British society as highly fragmented. In a sense, the position of a left-wing filmmaker like Mike Leigh is questionable as he presents a society where no escape to a better future³⁹ is conceivable since the notion of class symbolises the cement of the British society.

CONCLUSION

1980s British and French films offered a coherent image of their contemporary society at every level: people in power, the institutions and the individuals. The dominant impression of British films was that of a cold and calculated world where people were categorized according to their professional and social status. Occasional attempts to bridge the gap between people from various social or ethnic backgrounds usually failed and these films depicted a patchwork society resulting from individuals living side by side. In fact, it was only when British films referred to citizens whose financial situation forced them to live on the margin of society that a more human image was projected through solidarity and mutual help. In French films, the priority was given to the personal over the professional and most central characters insisted on the importance of human feelings. These films either dealt with socially responsible protagonists or with protagonists who presented French society through an idealistic prism. In that sense, crime films stood apart among 1980s French films by portraying a disillusioned and corrupt society in which racism was highly present. The atmosphere of crime films therefore signalled the end of an era in which certain values disappeared from public institutions.

This representation of the two societies echo a certain tendency of the way British and French filmmakers reacted to their political environment. In Britain, filmmakers like Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Alan Clarke, Stephen Frears, David Hare and Francis Drury clearly positioned themselves against the actions of the Conservative government and they understood their cinema as a cinema denouncing the social fragmentation encouraged by the political climate of the time. In France, most filmmakers refused to be too critical towards the Socialist government, which resulted in an overall production of consensual films. Indeed, the cutting edge nature of French films made in the seventies rapidly disappeared after 1981. Referring to this phenomenon during a recent screening of Gérard Blain's *Pierre et Djemila* (1986), Michel

Cieutat⁴⁰ — film critic at *Positif* — argued that this film, about the thorny question of integration in French society, represented a problematic issue with which the Left felt rather uncomfortable. Blain previously expressed a feeling of general misunderstanding triggered by the controversial comments following the release of his film. Filmmaker Jean-Claude Brisseau equally referred to the difficult position of Left-wing filmmakers under the Socialist government. As Brisseau⁴¹ explained recently, his film *De bruit et de fureur* (1987) was criticized by the Left for depicting a far too negative portrayal of French society. In fact, several filmmakers such as Gérard Blain, Jean-Claude Brisseau or a more mainstream director like Francis Girod (*Le Bon Plaisir*, 1983) expressed how it was complicated for them to make films grounded in their contemporary society while not being accused of criticizing the actions of the government.

This chapter on society briefly mentions some recurrent patterns concerning work and family which require to be further developed in the following chapters. For instance, the idea of a welcoming and diverse central Paris found in *Escalier C* (1984), where a teacher, an art critic, a drunken poet, an unemployed man, a fashion designer and a failed writer live under the same roof, was no exception in 1980s French cinema and the possibility for people of different backgrounds and incomes to establish strong social links will be studied in the chapter on work. In the same way, the need in French films to recreate a family *ersatz* in any given circumstances (what has been referred to as a 'group film') marks a strong sense of family although the transformation of the traditional family is also evoked. This particular area will also be analysed in more detail in a separate chapter. By contrast, the 'patchwork' pattern associated with British society on screen highlights more independent personalities in a decade praising the individual over a sense of a social fabric. This impression of people living side by side is equally found within the internal dynamic of the family circle in which the father, the mother and the children lead parallel lives. As for the difficulty for men to

communicate with women, which we have noticed both in French crime films (*Police* (1985), *Tchao Pantin* (1983)) and in British gangster films (*The Long Good Friday* (1981) and *Mona Lisa* (1986)) as well as the puzzlement that these men express about changing society, it is one of the central themes of the chapter on the family. The need for men to reassess their position both professionally (as more and more women worked), and within the family (where their previous set roles changed) will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The experience of work and

unemployment:

To laugh or to cry?

INTRODUCTION

For millions of people in the 1980s, the experience of work has to be more accurately described as the experience of unemployment. While unemployment in France was concentrated mainly in the *banlieue* of the main cities and in the old industrial northern area, in Britain the traditional divide between the north and the south of the country increased as unemployment affected mostly the inner cities, the Midlands and the North.

As unemployment rose dramatically throughout the European Community, France and Britain were badly hit with a respective unemployment rate of 7.5% and 9.8% of total labour force rates (Symes 1995, 2). A common bane in the two countries was the persistence of long-term unemployment (people out of work for over a year) which represented over 40% of total unemployment (Syme 1995, 4). Those who suffered most of unemployment were the young, the ethnic minorities and women. Although unemployment has always been higher among ethnic minorities than among white people, the economic situation of the 1980s widened the gap substantially. Similarly, the young were another victimized category with an unemployment rate of young people under 25 double the average in France and Britain (Syme 1995, 13). As for women, their situation in France was common to the rest of Europe with a higher unemployment rate than men while those who managed to find a job were more likely to work part-time or occupy temporary positions. This general trend did not apply to Britain where female unemployment was lower than for men. The creation of 2.5 million jobs in the service sector as well as the mass male unemployment in heavy industries during the 1980s contributed to this situation. In addition, official statistics on female unemployment were particularly misleading as married women often stopped signing on once their unemployment benefits were over (Brown and Scase eds. 1991, 9).

Both governments made it clear in their election campaigns that unemployment was among their main preoccupations. In Britain, the Thatcher government refused to be responsible for

the redistribution of wealth among the population while hoping that the creation of wealth would produce a 'trickle down effect'. By that, it was understood that as the rich became richer, the rest of the population would benefit from it as increased consumption and production would put the British economy back on its feet. But such a dynamic did not take place and the growth in income inequality continued to increase. Similarly, the decision to gradually cut down unemployment benefits in an attempt to discourage people to 'stay on the dole' and to reduce youth unemployment proved unsuccessful. By the mid-1980s, the Conservative government was forced to admit that unemployment remained a major issue and decided to provide financial help. In France, the Socialist Party set up a series of measures to fight unemployment shortly after its arrival in power. Thus, the government created jobs in the public sector, developed easier access to training and encouraged early retirements. Yet, these measures largely failed to solve the problem of unemployment whose rate remained high during the 1980s.

While European countries adopted various measures to fight unemployment, France and Britain spent most of their resources on youth training schemes (Syme 1995, 15). Work experience programmes, training schemes and tax incentives to encourage employers to provide placements were introduced for the young (Maclean 1998, 140 and Brown and Scase eds. 1991, 100). However, the majority of school-leavers found the labour market closed to them. In Britain, mass youth unemployment played a role in the riots which took place in the summer of 1981, together with the fact that ethnic minorities also constituted a disproportionate number of the unemployed. Similarly, in France the fringe of the population most affected by unemployment was found among the young belonging to ethnic communities. The governmental action set up in the *banlieue* to fight youth unemployment was not sufficient enough to provide a sensible change in terms of job opportunities. As a result, these actions were often considered by the young from the *banlieue* as a sign of good

will from the government in order to keep the peace in these sensitive areas but not as a genuine program to eradicate unemployment (Hérault and Lapeyronnie 2001, 201-2).

Although the same economic difficulties affected an important part of the population in Britain and France in the 1980s, the representation of financial hardship and lack of job opportunities in films proved to be quite different. Even if genres in the 1980s were not as clear-cut as they used to be, with the exception of *Dernier été* (Robert Guédiguian and Frank Le Wita, 1981) and *Le Grain de sable* (Pomme Meffre, 1982), French cinema tended to produce medium-budget comedies to refer to issues of unemployment such as *Viens chez moi, j'habite chez une copine* (Patrice Leconte, 1980), *Le Jour se lève et les conneries commencent* (Claude Mulot, 1981), *Pour cent briques, t'as plus rien!* (Edouard Molinaro, 1982), *Le Père Noël est une ordure* (Jean-Marie Poiré, 1982), *La Smala* (Jean-Loup Hubert, 1983), *Les Fugitifs* (Francis Veber, 1986), *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (Etienne Chatiliez, 1987), *La Comédie du travail* (Luc Moullet, 1987), *Romuald et Juliette* (Coline Serreau, 1989) whereas British cinema generally adopted a realist approach in low-budget productions such as *Meantime* (Mike Leigh, 1983), *Looks and Smiles* (Ken Loach, 1981), *Fords on Water* (Barry Bliss, 1983), *Business as Usual* (Lezli-An Barrett, 1987) and *Vroom* (Beeban Kidron, 1988). In fact, there is a specific tradition of popular comedies in French cinema which was exploited in reference to the theme of unemployment in the 1980s. This period corresponded to the success of the *café-théâtre* actors who became increasingly popular in comedies denouncing certain features of their contemporary society. Therefore, *Viens chez moi, j'habite chez une copine* and *Marche à l'ombre* were box-office successes with respectively 2.8 million spectators in 1981 and 6.1 million spectators in 1984 while *Le Père Noël est une ordure* has become a cult movie and is still widely used as a reference in terms of popular culture. In Britain, films addressing questions of unemployment were anchored in the national

tradition of social-realist cinema with the use of location shooting, non-professional actors and small budgets.

The general attitude of film critics and scholars is to consider that in the 1980s issues of unemployment and lack of job opportunities were largely ignored by French cinema (with the exception of *beur* cinema) whereas it had been central to British cinema. Issues of new working conditions and unemployment in 1980s French cinema produced very little discussion (usually in the form of short articles or reviews) whereas British cinema has generated a consistent amount of criticism (see for instance, Pilard 1989, 107-23, Hill 1999a, 166-91, Lay 2002, 83-6 and numerous monographs on the work of Ken Loach (McKnight ed. 1997, Leigh 2002) and Mike Leigh (Coveney 1997, Carvey and Quart 2000). What is generally understood is that French films about unemployment and social issues failed to tackle these questions properly by sketching them too lightly. On the contrary, British films have been largely praised for the accuracy with which they depicted the situation at the time.

Although it is undeniable that there is a more serious reflection on unemployment in British films, the general tone is rather pessimistic and reveals a stagnant situation. In the end, the working class cannot escape the economic situation and is condemned to suffer its condition. This involves a discourse which finally confirms the official discourse about the inability of the working class to adapt to the new economic situation, which these films were supposed to condemn. In addition, most of the British films were badly distributed and confined to a handful of art cinemas for several reasons (see chapter two on the film industry). As a result, they were mostly seen by an educated audience who learnt about the life of poor people. These films confirmed the concerns of this specific audience about social injustice and the condition of the unemployed. In French cinema, films about unemployment were seen by a large proportion of the population, thus avoiding the idea of ghettoisation of poverty on screen. Yet, a counterargument could be that including this part of the population in

mainstream comedies turned unemployment into a banal issue. The aim of this chapter is not to decide what was the best option, between a British film offering a serious discourse on unemployment but only seen by a handful of people with a secure job or a popular French comedy de-dramatizing the issue of unemployment. But it is to investigate what the films say about the issue of unemployment and the difficulties of finding a job. In particular, it seems timely to examine how the French comedies contribute to the representation of unemployment. As far as the thematic aspect is concerned, one way of understanding the discrepancy between the two national cinemas is to consider that French and British films did not address the same question. British cinema underlined how the Thatcherite economy affected the everyday life of the working class. In French cinema, the question often consisted of tackling how to make the best out of a new economic situation, an attitude which could have reflected a certain disbelief in the long-awaited economic improvement promised by the government. Although French and British films often included unemployed characters who were not looking for a job, French cinema often presented the decision to live on unemployment benefits as a personal choice whereas in British cinema it was because there were no jobs available for the characters.

In order to analyse how 1980s French and British cinemas depict work and unemployment, the representation of the unemployed serves as a starting point, followed by women's strategies to avoid unemployment. The status of people on the margin such as artists and intellectuals will also be questioned, for the extent to which they voluntarily remain outside the economic reality. And finally the last part of the chapter will deal with the representation of the ethnic minorities as a category of citizens particularly affected by unemployment.

I - THE UNEMPLOYED

Against a background of unemployment in France and Britain, few films chose to tackle this issue in the 1980s or give the leading roles to the unemployed, with the noticeable exceptions of *Looks and Smiles* (1981), *Meantime* (1983), *Fords on Water* (1983), *A Letter to Brezhnev* (1985) and *Vroom* (1988) in British cinema and *Viens chez moi, j'habite chez une copine* (1980), *Dernier été* (1981), *Le Jour se lève et les conneries commencent* (1981), *Le Grain de sable* (1982), *Pour cent briques, t'as plus rien!* (1982), *La Smala* (1983), *La Comédie du travail* (1987), *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (1987) and *Romuald et Juliette* (1987) in French cinema. The unemployed were also present in the form of secondary characters in both national cinemas with, for instance, Bruno (Jean-Pierre Bacri) in *Escalier C* (1984), Armand (Hubert Deschamps) in *Garçon* (Claude Sautet, 1983) and Felix (Gérard Jugnot) and Josette (Marie-Anne Chazel) in *Le Père Noël est une ordure* (1982) in French cinema and Kieran (John Thaw) in *Business as Usual* (1987) and Sue's father (Willie Ross) in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1986) in British cinema.

In addition to the British fiction film production, Michael Grigsby shot *Living on the Edge* (1987), a documentary collage of what it meant to be unemployed in 1980s Britain through the experience of several families. Another important feature of the representation of unemployment in Britain was the launch on BBC2 of the quality drama *Boys from the Blackstuff* (Philip Saville) in the Autumn of 1982. Set in Liverpool and engaging with the everyday life of the unemployed, the drama series set 'an iconography of life on the dole' (Millington 1993, 126) associating social problems with a comedy tone which would also be present in Channel Four's series *Brookside* and the feature film *A Letter to Brezhnev* (1985).

Depicting the unemployed in British cinema of the 1980s inevitably referred to the former respectable working class now made redundant by the economic circumstances. As such, in *Meantime* M. Pollock (Jeff Robert) used to be a manual worker in London, Alan (Tony Pitts)

and Mick (Graham Green) in *Looks and Smiles* are looking for jobs as mechanics in Sheffield, in *Vroom* Jake (Clive Owen) has given up any hope of finding any type of menial job in Lancashire, and Eddie (Mark Wingett) is unemployed while his friend's father has been made redundant from the Ford factory in *Fords on Water*. In French cinema unemployment affected characters from different backgrounds: the Groseille are depicted as a good-for-nothing family living on the dole in the North of France in *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*, Solange (Delphine Seyrig) is a middle-aged former employee in *Le Grain de sable*, Benoît Constant (Roland Blanche) is a former bank clerk and Sylvain Berg (Henri Déus) is an alpinist in *La Comédie du travail*. Robert (Victor Lanoux) used to be a manual worker in *La Smala* and Gilbert (Gérard Meylan) was a factory worker in *Dernier été*. Romuald (Daniel Auteuil) is the chairman of a dairy firm in *Romuald et Juliette*. In terms of *mise en scène* and choice of characters, British cinema insisted on ordinariness as the condition of the unemployed in Britain whereas French cinema focused on atypical examples which, as a result, de-dramatise unemployment and made it appear as an 'unreal' threat. What 'unreal threat' suggests is that since the unemployed characters present 'abnormal' characteristics such as extreme laziness in *La Vie* or extreme stupidity in *La Smala*, their unemployment is not due to the economic situation but to a failure in their personalities. Even if *Dernier été* and *Le Grain de sable* appear as exceptions in French cinema, by insisting on the 'ordinary' personality of Gilbert and Solange, their alienation focuses on their lost ideals and in both films the dramatic ending is perceived as a personal tragedy to which no metonymic value is given. The cause of Solange's unemployment is not the economic recession but her idealistic motivations while Gilbert is the victim of a violent old man.

1 - Case study: *Meantime* and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*

The comparison between the Groseille family in *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* and the Pollock family in *Meantime* illustrates the discrepancy between the two national cinemas. Both households consist of unemployed parents spending most of their time at home with their children living with them. Made on a budget of 2.2 million francs with the help of the *avance sur recettes*, *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (1987) was the first feature film of Etienne Chatiliez whose decision to make a feature followed a successful career in advertising. One of the blockbusters of the 1980s with 4 million spectators, *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* is a comedy which depicts the everyday life of two families, the unemployed Groseille and the middle-class Catholic Le Quesnoy. The baby swapping, which took place twelve years before, causes chaos and its consequences become the heart of this comedy. By contrast *Meantime* was shot on 16mm and originally planned to be a television film for Channel Four before its theatrical release was decided (Leigh 1995, xviii). Set on the Chigwell housing estate in the East End of London, it describes the life of an unemployed family consisting of the parents Frank (Jeff Robert) and Mavis (Pam Ferris) and their two sons Colin (Tim Roth) and Mark (Phil Daniels) in their early twenties. Even if there are similarities in the material life of the two families since they both live on unemployment benefits in a council flat, their portrayals are poles apart. Physically as well as in their sartorial habit, the Pollocks are a symbol of dreary ordinariness, some would even say invisibility. The setting enhances this impression of ordinariness due to the exiguity of the flat whose colourless walls and furniture leave an overall dull image. The impression of claustrophobia experienced by the protagonists is conveyed by the central role of the corridor in which two people cannot even cross one another. This space contrasts strongly with the Groseilles' flat in *La Vie*. Here, the depth-of-field highlights the spacious living room of the council flat, especially when the mother stands on the balcony. The overweight Groseilles are bigger than

life in their representation and their grotesque appearance is reinforced by numerous close ups of their faces while their tasteless flashy clothes echo their wallpaper and turn them into comic characters. In fact, the lack of specific features of the Pollock family makes them an archetype of the unemployed whereas the Groseilles are a caricature. Moreover, while the Pollocks are characterized by their inactivity, the Groseilles are constantly keeping themselves busy by looking after their physical appearances or by entertaining themselves with card games. The singing of the mother and daughter also contributes to a lively atmosphere whereas the Pollocks' silence is only broken by family bickering and the monotonous sound delivered by television.



Meantime: Colin (Tim Roth), Frank (Jeff Robert) and Mark (Phil Daniels) watching television

This contrast is underlined by the camera work in *Meantime* with numerous static shots of the three men sitting in front of the television or slow tracking shots following the characters inside their flat. In *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*, the quick pace of the film is maintained by a parallel editing on the two families which enhances this impression of overactive characters. It is interesting to note that this aesthetic choice appears to have influenced French film critics who avoided talking about their unemployed status — with the

exception of *Les Cahiers du cinéma* (Sabouraud 1988, 61) — by referring to the Groseille family as 'nice proletarians' (Génin 1987), 'common people' (Audé 1988, 75) and 'an eccentric family' (Boué 1988). Anglo-American film critics not only ignored the fact that the Groseille family was unemployed but presented their everyday occupation as a normal activity: 'Dad fritters away his days playing poker while mum reads crime comics and the kids smoke fags, sniff glue and get pissed' (Minson 1989, 24) or 'the chaotic Groseille family works out more money-grabbing so that dad can carry on playing poker and mum reads her crime comics' (Elley 1989, 49). By contrast, the similar activity of the characters in *Meantime* was ignored by critics who merely saw the representation of unemployment. To take but a few examples, John Pym's review (1983/84, 62) opens with: 'How can the reality of a lifetime of enforced leisure, a lifetime on the dole, a lifetime spent accepting week by week the charity of an indifferent nation, be brought home to those of us fortunate enough to be in work, in Britain, on New Year's Day 1984?' and for the critic in *Positif*, this film refers to the fact that 'nowadays there are no jobs available!' (Le Fanu 1984, 33).

2 - Genre

The discrepancy between *La Vie* and *Meantime* expresses a general tendency of French and British cinemas to refer to unemployment using the comedy genre in French films and social realism in British films. Thus, in *Le Père Noël est une ordure*, *Pour cent briques t'as plus rien!* and *La Smala* the unemployed characters are presented as farcical and their stupidity is used as a comical device implying that even in a period of economic prosperity they would remain unemployable. Apart from *Dernier été* and *Le Grain de sable*, in French cinema the issue of unemployment was usually resolved in a more positive light and the tendency was to blame the personality of the unemployed character. In *La Vie*, the Groseille family embodies two main aspects of 1980s society through, on the one hand, its unemployment and, on the

other, its embrace of consumerism (it may not be a coincidence that there is 'oseille' — which means money in slang — in the name Groseille). By selling their son Momo (Benoît Magimel), his biological family turns him into merchandise: '[the Groseille family moves] from immobility to exchange and market: Momo is a commodity which is sold twice for 20000 francs' (Audé 1988, 76). This theme of making easy money is taken further when Momo keeps bringing money to the Groseille family by stealing and selling the Le Quesnoy's silver. And in *Romuald et Juliette*, the short spell of unemployment experienced by Romuald (Daniel Auteuil) allows him to get his priorities right. After unfairly losing his job as the chairman of a dairy factory, Romuald is helped by his black middle-aged cleaner Juliette (Firmine Richard) to regain his position. During his temporary dismissal, Romuald's life shifts from indoors (his flat, his car, his office) to outdoors (the street, the garden party) and from central Paris to the *banlieue* where Juliette lives. The focus of Romuald's life changes from his career to his new family and unemployment is perceived as a blessing which turned Romuald into a better person⁴². Tellingly, while the first scene introduces Romuald as a stressed businessman, the last scene ends on a freeze shot of Romuald and Juliette hugging each other after Romuald discovers that Juliette is pregnant with his child. The positive twist at the end of French films was largely encouraged by the comedy genre to which they belonged and in the 1980s, this trend led to the most unlikely final scenes. By way of contrast, British films possessed a realist aesthetic in their discovery of pockets of poverty in contemporary Britain and most of them left the issue of unemployment unresolved at the end. Like *Meantime* in which the economic situation of the father and his two sons does not change⁴³, *Looks and Smiles* underlines the routine of two school-leavers and as Ken Loach (Wapshott 1981, 11) explained at the time of the film's release: 'We were anxious to make a film which said that most kids are not involved in urban riots. They lead quiet lives — quiet despair'. The choice of non-professional actors and the typical North of England urban setting

of a black and white film completely shot on location in Sheffield reinforce the idea of the mundane and the everyday which thus provides an allegory for unemployed youth in the North. The social-realist genre is not enough to justify such a depressing picture. It is not because social realism largely implies location shooting, non-professional actors and a focus on the have-nots that it involves no hope of improvement in terms of personal destiny. 'The social problem film does not really deal with social problems in their social aspects at all (i.e. as problems of the social structure) so much as problems of the individual (i.e. his or her personal qualities or attributes)' (Hill 1986, 56). Even if John Hill's position is correct in the sense that there is no direct discussion of the structural factors giving rise to the character's socio-economic situation, nevertheless in the films under discussion here, the external causes of the individual's predicament loom large. The films might not address the wider structural issues but one is always aware of their presence in the film's background. As previously mentioned, British films in the 1980s mainly referred to 'ordinary' characters from a working-class background and were set in inner cities and Northern towns. Although the social structure is not clearly denounced as responsible for the high rate of unemployment through a didactic discourse, some key scenes nevertheless remind the audience of the protagonists' urge to use their manual skills which the economic situation prevents them to do. The garage scenes showing Mick repairing his motorbike in *Looks and Smiles* and Jake buying a second-hand part to fix his car in *Vroom* establish these two characters engaged in manual activities. Yet, their professional training remains a hobby since they cannot find a job as mechanics in the area. The social structure is criticized through common situations involving the protagonists and secondary characters, especially in all the outside scenes where groups of youths are filmed killing time during the day. Thus, in *Looks and Smiles*, a long scene in a mall points out a group of school-leavers playing football with a can before being required to stop by two policemen. The use of long shots reinforces the anonymity of the youths, thus

turning their examples into an allegory of youth unemployment. The setting (the mall) is there as a reminder of powerful economic networks contrasting with individual poverty. Equally interesting is a scene in which Mick (Graham Green) and Alan (Tony Pitts) are seen in a medium shot sitting on swings in a children's playground.



Looks and Smiles: Mick (Graham Green) and Alan (Tony Pitts).

This is followed by one of the most evocative scenes of the film. After an over-the-shoulder shot of an Army leaflet, a static medium shot where movement is only conveyed through the regular and slow swing of Mick and Alan insists on their childlike behaviour which makes the tanks on the leaflet look like toys on a Christmas catalogue. This visual discrepancy is doubled by Alan reading out aloud which sports are available in the Army as if contemplating a holiday in an adventure camp. Very quickly after this scene, Alan joins up while underage Mick is forbidden to do the same by his father. As Loach (Fuller 1998, 59) explained 'the third kid has avoided the unemployment issue by joining the army'. Although Alan's experience in the Army is never seen on screen, it is wittily criticized through Alan's evolution between the first and the second fight outside the night club which reveals his increasing physical and verbal violence. Yet Mick's perception of Alan implicitly demonstrates why the money, the 'hero' image and the social status can be tempting for unemployed youths.

Vroom and *Fords on Water* are two road movies drawing the map of unemployment in Britain. In *Vroom*, urban unemployment is underlined by closed shops and empty stalls in the background when Jake goes into town and by the typical 1960s realism 'shot of our town from that hill' (Higson 1984, 13) where, ironically, what catches the attention is the unused chimneys from the local factory. This scene recalls a similar scene in *Kes* (Ken Loach, 1969) in which fumes did come out from the chimneys. And in *Fords on Water*, radio reports and newspaper clips are continually included in the narrative as the industrial situation becomes increasingly tense. Even if Hill's position discussed earlier can be understood in relation to a lack of discussion concerning the actual social structure in the films, my point is that these British films still clearly hold the social structure responsible for destroying the professional life of so many people.

3 - The dole queue

A good illustration of the way unemployment was represented in the two cinemas is provided by the representation of the dole queue. Although all the films discussed deal with unemployment, the dole queue is a component only found in *Looks and Smiles*, *Meantime*, *Le Grain de sable* and *La Comédie du travail*. A common point between the four scenes is the presence in the dole queue of unemployed people from different age groups and ethnicities with a higher proportion of men. In *La Comédie du travail*, the camera focuses on blue-eyed, tanned and good-looking Sylvain Berg who represents the category of citizens who are unemployed by choice, as he ironically uses the double meaning of the word *licencié* (a graduate or someone who has been dismissed). Peeking at Sylvain in the dole queue, the shots from the point of view of two female staff from the job centre turned the unemployed character into an object of desire. Ironically, Sylvain's beauty will play against him as the dedicated staff will pester him by finding him a job. Sylvain's experience shows

unemployment as a blessing since living at the state's expense enables him to finance his passion for climbing. Similar to the Groseille family in *La Vie*, Sylvain's position denounces the weakness of a lenient system by reflecting on how unemployment regulations can be easily turned to the individual's advantage under the Socialist government. By contrast, the dole scene in *Looks and Smiles* and *Meantime* alternates between close shots of the claimants' faces and high-angle shots of the large hall where people are queuing. The hazy atmosphere, the confusion of people's voices in the background and the immobility of the claimants sketch a desolate and hopeless picture. In *Looks and Smiles* the camera stops on a group of four school-leavers sitting aimlessly in a corner since the unemployment centre has become the new meeting point for the younger generation. In addition to youth unemployment, in *Looks and Smiles* the opening scene of two children and a pram waiting in the job centre and in *Meantime* the presence of the Pollock father and his two sons in the same queue underlines that unemployment affects whole families. The *mise en scène* also highlights youth unemployment in *Made in Britain* (1983) by focusing on juvenile delinquent Trevor (Tim Roth) talking to a boy of the same age in the foreground while older unemployed people at the job centre are only shot in the background. Alan Clarke carried his exploration of youth unemployment with the release in 1987 of *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, this time shifting from the anarchist violence of Trevor to the humour of the two eponymous girls. Here the two school-leavers do not even go to the job centre as they know that no decent jobs are available in the area. Whereas British films put the blame on economic conditions to explain unemployment, French comedies chose to de-dramatise the subject by providing single examples of socially handicapped characters. And since the unemployed status of the French characters is due to personal deficiencies rather than to economic ones, the state of the national economy is not questioned. Therefore, even if 1980s French cinema referred to questions of unemployment, the responsibility of the State is denied. This can be read as a way for French filmmakers to

avoid positioning themselves towards the action of the Socialist government in relation to unemployment.

II - AVOIDING UNEMPLOYMENT

The job crisis in France and Britain was not only due to the recession, it was also structural. The massive closing down of heavy industries provoked the anger of whole communities of workers who fought in order to keep their positions. The shortage of work and the threat of redundancies turned employment into a precious privilege, especially for people with manual skills or little qualifications. And a direct consequence of the high rate of unemployment, increased precariousness, occurred on the labour market. The decrease in the number of trade union members in France, which had already started in the mid-1970s, gathered speed in the 1980s. Even if union membership was more anchored in the public than the private sector in France, it became the lowest in Europe during this decade. This was the result of three main factors: the high level of unemployment which caused more flexibility among workers, the decline of heavy industries (a traditional bastion of trade-unionism) and the decision of the Socialist government to further marginalize the role of trade unions (Maclean 1998, 169). In Britain, the Conservative government was determined to apply the law of the market to the industry and in order to do so, curtailed the power of trade unions. Therefore, the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982 made it more difficult for unions to take industrial actions and new restraints were introduced on picketing and secondary picketing. The Thatcher government faced long and violent strikes, especially from the miners' unions in the mid-1980s. Yet, trade unions were forced to accept 'Mrs Thatcher's refusal on ideological grounds to consult with union leaders in the way that all previous governments had done' (Marwick 1990, 286).

1 - Women's actions

A noteworthy discrepancy between the two national cinemas in the 1980s was that industrial action and the role of trade unions had an extremely limited impact in French cinema while in British cinema several films tackled the issue of redundancies as well as the trade unions. However, as British films depicted, the unions were no longer seen as the saviour of the working-class interests and a number of films brought out this tension, especially those focusing on women workers. It is remarkable that among French production of the 1980s, *Le Voyage à Paimpol* stands out as being — to my knowledge — the only film depicting the everyday life and the industrial action of factory workers. As Michel Cadé (2000, 150) explains in *L'Ecran bleu* (a study dedicated to the representation of workers in French cinema), the 1980s were significant for their absence of the representation of workers on screen. Similarly, *Cinéma et mouvement social* (Breton, Guilloux, Perron and Roy eds. 2000, 72) is a chronological account of social unrest in the cinema, which moves directly from the 1970s to the 1990s — after one single sentence mentioning the poverty of the 1980s in the area. John Berry, an American filmmaker settled in Paris, made *Le Voyage à Paimpol* in 1985 with the help of the *avance sur recettes*. Working within the social-realist genre, the film relates the story of Maryvonne (Myriam Boyer) and her fight against automation in a Breton factory. The narration is regularly interrupted by brief scenes relating Maryvonne's dreams as a woman (an erotic dream with a journalist), a mother (giving birth to a water-heater in the factory) and a worker (as a Russian revolutionary). The decision to give the leading role in an industrial action to a woman echoes a wider trend in 1980s British films. Although examples of men involved in picketing scenes and industrial clashes did appear in the 1980s (as in *Britannia Hospital* (1982), *Fords on Water* (1983) and *The Nature of the Beast* (Franco Rosso, 1988)), the high number of films featuring women as the main protagonists was a characteristic of the 1980s with *Steaming* (Joseph Losey, 1984), *Blood Red Roses* (John

McGrath, 1986), *Business as Usual* (Lezli-An Barrett, 1987) and *Strapless* (David Hare, 1989)⁴⁴. *Steaming* describes a group of women who decide to fight against the closure of their local Turkish baths in London. *Blood Red Roses* is a chronicle of a female trade union leader in a Scottish factory. *Business as Usual* focuses on unfair dismissal in a Liverpool clothes shop and *Strapless* evokes the fight against National Health Service cuts. As a way of understanding how women organised industrial action and how their involvement was perceived by men, *Business as Usual* and *Le Voyage à Paimpol* will be taken as case studies. Female director Lezli-An Barrett's first feature film *Business as Usual*⁴⁵ provides a valuable example in the way the film explores Babs Flynn's (Glenda Jackson) professional battle together with her husband's reaction to her evolution. At forty five, the main protagonist Babs is a wife and a mother who works as the manageress of a clothes shop. After defending a young black employee called Josie (Cathy Tyson) against the manager's sexual harassment, she loses her job. Rejecting this unfair dismissal, Babs receives the support of a trade union and starts picketing in front of her former shop. In *Business as Usual* well-organised picketing demonstrates that, for British workers in the North, industrial unrest is common practice. The fluidity and close shots allowed by the handheld camera emphasize the contrast between the violence and rapidity of the police and the blasé attitude of the demonstrators. National press and television coverage underlined by a succession of newspaper headlines on the screen and Babs' interviews on television turn this issue into an example for women workers. Babs' battle can be seen on a wider scale as a political fight against the entrepreneurial spirit of the Thatcher years symbolised by Aelita, the high-profit London-based company which owns the shop. By contrast, picketing is more of a spontaneous action in *Le Voyage à Paimpol* and the protest remains a single local issue. This is illustrated by a scene outside the factory where Maryvonne looks after her son during the picketing, before her spontaneous decision to give a

speech to her colleagues. With the camera following Maryvonne in her hesitations, the scene highlights the lack of organisation of the workers in what is presented as an isolated action.

2 - Men's reactions

As women got increasingly involved with industrial unrest, men were depicted as supporting a more traditional form of unionism and finding it hard to adapt to their wives' new attitudes. Yet, to various extents, they play a role in the struggle in which their wives are taking part. In *Le Voyage à Paimpol*, Joël (Michel Boujenah) works in the same factory as Maryvonne, is a trade union member and a supportive husband both in the domestic and professional sphere. After the success of *Trois hommes et un couffin* (Coline Serreau, 1985), Michel Boujenah reprises the unusual role of the ideal 'motherly' father in favour of equality inside the couple. By way of contrast, Babs has to lead a battle on the domestic and professional front. Therefore, a discouraged Babs returning home after her dismissal is met with blame from her unemployed husband Kieran (John Thaw). The *mise en abîme* where Kieran's face appears next to hers in the mirror paradoxically evokes their similar unemployment and the distance that Kieran's unemployment has created between them. At that moment, Kieran realises that he does not play a central part in his wife's life anymore, yet he remains present, overshadowing her political activity. Even if Kieran has lost faith in the power of trade unions after losing the battle against the closure of the Tate and Lyle sugar refinery, he still believes in what can be considered old-fashioned trade unionism, where lengthy discussions with the employer are compulsory before any kind of action. Proud and jealous of Babs (confirmed in the scene where he remains backstage while Babs delivers a speech in front of the trade union meeting), feeling emasculated, Kieran cannot support her as his more traditional view of trade unionism proves outdated nine years into Thatcherism. As John Hill (1999a, 188), invoking Gramsci, explains, 'the novelty of [*Business as Usual*] is precisely its concern to offer an

'optimism of the will' at a time when 'pessimism of the intellect' might have been expected'. Although Babs does not formulate a new theory of industrial relations to cope with the Thatcher era, she knows that she has to fight (optimism of the will) instead of accepting her fate like her husband does (pessimism of the intellect). Likewise, filmmaker John McGrath (Petley 1986b, 361) explains that he wanted the final scene of *Blood Red Roses* to express that 'Bessie is not on her own, there are millions like her, this is the beginning of hope and activity'. In comparison, *Le Voyage à Paimpol* insists on the 'optimism of the will' while the 'pessimism of the intellect' does not appear as a national issue. Presented as utopian through the men's point of view, the successful battles of Babs, Bessie and Maryvonne inject a second breath of life into the power of trade unions.

In this filmic portrayal of contemporary France and Britain, women frequently projected a positive image in their struggle against adverse economic circumstances through a combative approach towards reality (*Blood Red Roses*, *Business as Usual*, *Strapless*, *Romuald et Juliette*, *Le Voyage à Paimpol*). In the case of men, the films did not provide such a positive representation of unemployment as men tended towards resignation (*Business as Usual*, *The Nature of the Beast*, *Fords on Water*). The following section suggests another solution adopted by male artists and intellectuals which was to ignore the question of unemployment by creating their own make-believe world.

III - PEOPLE ON THE MARGIN

Artists and intellectuals have often been considered to be on the margins of society. Neither completely integrated within the labour market nor totally excluded, their in-between status became even more questionable in the 1980s, as a way of denying unemployment. Besides, the influence of the post-modern was felt through the loss of ideology which led to a complete lack of interest on the part of artists and intellectuals in a society proclaiming the superiority

of money over personal values. If intellectuals and artists were not a new type of character in the two national cinemas, they are worth studying within the economic context of the 1980s where they were presented in complete opposition to Thatcher's rampant commercialism in British cinema and in a more introspective light in French cinema. The French box office success of *Marche à l'ombre* (6.1 million spectators) as well as the international recognition of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* also justify the study of artists-to-be and intellectuals as representative of the two national cinemas. In order to illustrate how artists and intellectuals were presented in relation to the issue of work and unemployment, examples will be taken from *Marche à l'ombre* (Michel Blanc, 1984), *Paroles et musique* (Elie Chouraqui, 1984), *Le Complexe du kangourou* (Pierre Jolivet, 1986) and *Un monde sans pitié* (Eric Rochant, 1989) in French cinema and *Breaking Glass* (Brian Gibson, 1980), *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1985 and 1987) in British cinema.

1 - Artists

Although French films such as *Rendez-vous* (André Téchiné, 1985), *La Femme de ma vie* (Régis Wargnier, 1986) and *L'Enfance de l'art* (Francis Girod, 1988) do focus on artists, they will not be analysed because they merely represent artists in relation to their personal experience towards art. Since this section deals with questions of work and unemployment, it seems more appropriate to select films whose intention was to focus essentially on the artist facing the reality of everyday life in his or her contemporary society. For that reason, *Paroles et musique* (1984), *Marche à l'ombre* (1984) and *Le Complexe du kangourou* (1986) are analysed. In British cinema, the depiction of the artist in relation to his/her contemporary society was only found in *Breaking Glass*. One of the first Goldcrest productions, *Breaking*

Glass is an exception among 1980s British films by combining in an interesting format the world of punk music with references to social issues in contemporary Britain⁴⁶.

All these films about artists share a concern with the role of *mise en scène* as an important element in elaborating the image of the artist. A 'room at the top' in central Paris as a symbol of future recognition and fame is shared by young musicians Jeremy (Christophe Lambert) and Michel (Richard Anconina) in *Paroles et musique* and by Loïc (Roland Giraud) and a Polish writer in *Le Complexe du kangourou*. Communal life takes the form of a studio version of a squat in a collapsing block of flats occupied by black people in *Marche à l'ombre* (as director Michel Blanc (Dazat and Tonnerre 1985, 12) explains, he was not authorized to use a real location) was also part of the new iconography of the young artist exploring new social, cultural and musical experiences. Michel Blanc (Arbaudie 1984, 8), who wanted to reflect on what it is like to be a city dweller in *Marche à l'ombre*, presented a place which has nothing to do with a dreamlike artist loft but represents a womblike place where the artist escapes from the outside world. Alternating with indoor scenes, street scenes reveal the ambiguity of the Paris which belongs to these artists who incessantly roam inside the city while representing the pressure of social rules, especially through their relationship with the police force. By contrast, in *Breaking Glass* indoor spaces do not represent a refuge from the harshness of the outside world. The place where singer Kate Crawley (Hazel O'Connor)⁴⁷ lives is not associated with the idea of a protective space and the comfortable appearance of the house is undermined by the intrusion of a succession of unwanted musicians. As for Kate's rehearsal place in an empty council flat, the indoor scene is always carefully preceded by a long static shot of the run-down estate with linen floating on the clotheslines. In this film, about which John Pym (1980, 109) wrote that it 'comes to grips with present-day London as something more than a mere backdrop', the numerous street scenes gradually evolve from the violence of fascist attacks to the anonymity of concrete buildings and multi-storey car parks. As Kate

Crawley becomes famous, her environment is perceived as more and more anonymous and unwelcoming.

French films consider that although the artists-to-be have financial difficulties, they are the actors of their own destinies and choices. In *Le Complexe du kangourou*, if Loïc lacks money, it is not caused by the economic situation but by his refusal to compromise with the rules of society. Following the credits, a street scene presents Loïc (Roland Giraud) selling chestnuts in winter. When his brother Bob (Stéphane Freiss) arrives, the visual contrast between the two men is expressed by Loïc's woollen hat and old pair of jeans and Bob's elegance with his black coat, white shirt and tie. It is Loïc's interaction first with a painter asking for advice, then with a gallery owner (whose Bentley in the background testifies to his high profile status) who wants to organise an exhibition of Loïc's paintings, that position Loïc as an artist. Loïc's refusal to compromise for the sake of art meets the misunderstanding of his brother (an outlet-shop owner) who accepts any possibility to make money. Despite the friendly personalities of the two brothers, the film discourse supports Loïc's attitude as morally sound and condemns the spontaneous but entrepreneurial spirit of Bob. Loïc's position outside the labour market, displaying a personal inability to fit within society, was noticed by the press: 'Under the happiness of the clown [Loïc] has the seriousness of people who cannot adapt themselves to everyday life' (Siclier 1986), 'It is a bitter-sweet comedy. Pierre Jolivet confirms with this second feature film that he likes to talk about losers and outsiders, all these people whom Françoise Sagan used to refer nicely as inadapted' (Murat 1986). By putting the blame on personal circumstances, French films remained neutral about the current economic situation. Moreover, in most of these films, the social reality of 1980s France was denied as the cause of the marginality of the artists since their economic situation was associated with their Peter Pan syndrome. Hence in *Paroles et musique* Michel and Jeremy, described as 'big kids' (Siclier 1985a) are dressed as teenagers and in *Le Complexe du kangourou* Loïc borrows

the paraphernalia of a child with his woollen hat, his bicycle (he does not have a driving licence) and his drawing pens. The financial difficulties experienced by these protagonists are underlined by a contrasting effect between 'we the artists' on one side and 'them the money makers' on the other. Although the representation of the penniless *artiste maudit* is not new, in 1980s cinema the artist's social position on the margin of society was often contrasted with the typical successful characters of the 1980s. The artist's muse takes the form of an attractive, confident and wealthy woman with Margaux (Catherine Deneuve) in *Paroles et musique*, Claire (Clémentine Célarié) in *Le Complexe du kangourou* and Mathilde (Sophie Duez) in *Marche à l'ombre*.

There is nothing unusual in associating the artist with financial difficulties and in the 1980s, most film critics continued to perceive this reality as the norm for young artists, depicting characters such as François in *Marche à l'ombre* and Loïc in *Le Complexe du kangourou* as happy-go-lucky young men. However, *Cinématographe* notes about *Marche à l'ombre* that 'the box-office results would probably correspond to the unemployment figures provided by the Home Secretary' (Dazat 1984b, 70). This comment corroborates the idea that even if this film was a popular comedy addressing a large spectrum of the French population, it was nevertheless deeply-anchored in the socio-economic reality which it attempted to depict. And this film questions to which extent the choice of François and Denis to remain on the street is motivated by a personal decision or imposed by the economic situation. Similarly, film director Pierre Jolivet argued that there is a social reading of contemporary France to be made about *Le Complexe du kangourou* even if, as reminded by critic Françoise Audé (1986a, 73), 'light films are only taken seriously twenty years later'. What Jolivet asked for was a rehabilitation of popular comedies in France as another way of talking about the serious issue of unemployment. His film not only referred to the Bohemian status of the artist but to the wider issue of unemployment, which also affected this category of workers in the 1980s. In

fact, even if in *Marche à l'ombre* François has a real gift to play several musical instruments and in *Le Complexe du kangourou* Loïc has studied at art school (*les Beaux Arts* in Paris), Loïc sells chestnuts illegally in the street and François is forced to take up busking and stealing food from supermarkets.

In the British film *Breaking Glass*, the opposition between 'we the artist' and 'them the money makers' is made more obvious than in the French films mentioned above since the business spirit of the shark-like people in the music company is even more radical. With the help of famous music producer Bob Woods (Jon Finch), Kate's popularity steadily grows while the rest of the group is gradually left behind. Kate's belief in a fight against social injustice through her songs is reduced to a commercial promotion under Bob Woods' manipulative influence which ends up as a futuristic nightmare (suggested by Kate's corseted silver costume during her last concert) where injections are required to push Kate on stage. Although Kate collapses at the end of *Breaking Glass*, 'the seeds of her own destruction were not contained within her' (Pym 1980, 109). In a traditional 1980s realist way, she is a down-to-earth and decisive woman. Thus, her fall is perceived as orchestrated by the thirst for money of people in charge of the music industry. Even if Kate keeps singing that she will not be the victim of a dictatorial society motivated by gain in her hit song 'Big Brother' (interestingly written by music producer mogul Tony Visconti in real life), the 'system' proves stronger than her. The thirst for money represented by the people in the music business is highly contrasted with the issue of unemployment which looms over *Breaking Glass* as a permanent threat. Using non-diegetic sound, issues of unemployment and social unrest are efficiently introduced through regular narrative pauses. The repetitive pattern consists of showing static aerial shots of London while the soundtrack is made of radio news announcing the increasing unemployment figures, Thatcher's relations with the trade unions, the general economic crisis and the increased powers of the police force. This technique, together with

close shots of beggars sleeping on the streets and Danny's post-concert fights to get paid, conveys the impression that Kate and Danny's financial difficulties are not linked to their artist status but are part of a more general phenomenon affecting 1980s Britain. Through a didactic approach, the increase in unemployment in Britain is put in parallel with Kate's schizophrenia as she reaches success. As a result, Kate's complete collapse at the end is an ominous sign concerning Britain's future.

2 - Intellectuals

In common with artists, intellectuals in 1980s French and British films remain outside the labour market. Like artists, intellectuals place themselves in this equivocal position where no one can tell whether their unemployed status is voluntary or dictated by the economic situation. But by contrast with the artists who largely show an optimism of the will (ready to perform whatever the conditions), intellectuals mainly illustrate the pessimism of the intellect in films such as *Un monde sans pitié*, *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. *Un monde sans pitié* (1989) received the Critics Award at the Venice Film Festival and the Louis Delluc prize in 1989 and was celebrated by the film trade during the 1990 César ceremony, receiving awards as best first film and most promising young actor for Yvan Attal. The film has been described by film critics as the portrait of a generation (Roy 1989, Muller 1989, Trémois 1997, 22), and its director Eric Rochant has been seen as the precursor of the *jeune cinéma français* of the 1990s (Frodon 1989a) by ending a decade obsessed with money and career. Following the unexpected success of *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Frears, 1985), the Frears-Kureishi team worked together again with *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Frears, 1987) on what appeared as a more ambitious project in terms of cast, plot and finance. Yet, unlike *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the film did not fully convince the British critics who thought that the abundance of characters and ideas prevented it from giving an in-depth picture of the

situation (Forbes 1987/88, 66, Malcolm 1988, 13, Sweet 1988, 21) while it met the enthusiasm of French critics (Bourget 1988, 66-7, Jousse 1988, 8-9, Schidlow 1988).

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid presents itself as a film with a strong social and political message and the opening shot of a London wasteland with the voiceover of Margaret Thatcher's controversial discourse about the state of the inner cities, directly inscribed the film into a conflictual debate. Using the same technique, *Un monde sans pitié* equally opens on an outdoor shot of Paris but here the message delivered by Hippo's voice-over stating that there is nothing to believe in this world apart from falling in love, does not have such a powerful political edge. *Un monde sans pitié* is one of those films which Ginette Vincendeau (2000, 246) describes as focusing 'on heterosexual couples and their amorous liaisons and endorse the values of Romanticism, updated to contemporary Paris and filtered through the New Wave: imagination, tenderness, lyricism, freedom, the love of art'. And I would add that, under this polished and entertaining surface, the film provides a social comment through Hippo's lack of faith in society. Through the study of lower middle-class Hippo (Hippolite Girardot) anchored in a precise circle of friends and family in *Un monde sans pitié* and working-class Danny (Roland Gift) as a free-wheeling character in *Sammy and Rosie*, similarities emerge in their desire to remain on the margins of society. With a role which made him famous, Hippolite Girardot projects the image of a confident, clever and good-looking young man with a gift for socializing (to a lesser extent he already had a similar role in *Le Bon Plaisir* (1983)). And, in the British film, the performance of the then singer of popular rock group *Fine Young Cannibals* Roland Gift is also based on his glamorous and sensual personality, offering him some kind of laissez-passer through society. The two men are the products of the two capital cities (London and Paris), their apparent unsocial behaviour concerning work is opposed to a developed social life showing that their lack of faith in the institutions does not imply a lack of faith in the individual. In terms of work, Danny and

Hippo do not adhere to the idea of capitalism and thus deliberately put themselves outside the labour market. In *Un monde sans pitié*, a sense of solidarity as well as a similar attitude to society shared by Hippo and his best friend Halpern (Yvan Attal) is opposed to Nathalie's right-wing friends from the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. When he arrives at Nathalie's flat, Hippo's superiority towards the 'official' intellectual elite is conveyed through him being filmed in low-angle shots while the other men next to him are sitting in armchairs. Hippo ignores them and rings Halpern to come and talk to them, so that he can seduce Nathalie in the meantime. With Halpern arguing with Nathalie's friends in the foreground while in the background Hippo and Nathalie are talking in the kitchen, the *mise en scène* confirms Hippo's approval of Halpern's ideas and his unusual decision not to partake in the conversation underlines both his scorn for Nathalie's friends and his love for her. As for Danny in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, counter to Judith Williamson (1993, 130) who refers to him as 'the urban underclass', it will be explained later why it seems more appropriate to depict him as 'a streetwise black who is not surprised at anything and takes life as it comes' (Malcolm 1988, 13) since Danny's life can be understood as a personal choice in order to protest against society. In that sense, Kureishi's (Saada 1988, 11) statement that 'in reality Danny is not a victim even if he looks like one' corroborates the idea that Danny positions himself as a free entity.

Despite the fact that Danny and Hippo have a lot in common, these two unemployed characters are also the product of their national cinemas, that is to say the particular attention given to a middle-class environment in French films and a more deprived one in British films. Even if Danny and Hippo are both out of work, this situation does not reflect equally on their standard of living since Danny lives in a caravan in a wasteland and accepts Sammy's and Rosie's charity, whereas Hippo shares a spacious flat in central Paris with his younger brother, drives a car, plays poker and more generally lives a life where money is not a problem. In that

respect *Un monde sans pitié* combines the everyday life of a disillusioned young man with an attractive Parisian setting, thus adding to the narration a utopian side widely present in 1980s French cinema. A glamorous young man, Hippo can be seen as the younger brother of Michel Poiccard in Godard's *A bout de souffle* (1960), as his attitude echoes heroes of the Nouvelle Vague⁴⁸ who are described by Terry Lovell (1985, 41) as 'dissociated from their social roles.[...] They are marginal men, disaffected intellectuals, students and [...] a rather high-class tramp. Interest centres exclusively on immediate face-to-face relations'. Hippo belongs to this tradition of French characters who mainly exist thanks to their communication skills and therefore present themselves as chroniclers of contemporary society. The moral value conveyed by Hippo is one of true friendship and solidarity (he only cares about 'his best friend, his brother and his girlfriend') widely depicted in French cinema of the 1980s. Unlike the outspoken Hippo who makes his position towards society clear, quiet Danny cultivates a mysterious attitude. Danny is a much more politicised character and as a pacifist he believes that communal action must be taken to beat the system (in opposition to the riots which actually took place in Brixton in the 1980s). As expressed by Hanif Kureishi (Buruma 1990, 35), 'one plus of the repressive '80s has been cultural interest in marginalized and excluded groups'. The squalid aspect of the wasteland where Danny lives is quickly forgotten and turned into a refuge for Londoners. But in the work of Stephen Frears 'life cannot be utopian' (Sweet 1988, 21) in Thatcher's Britain and, following the inner logic of the film, Danny's happiness is destroyed by the bulldozers of property developers. A destruction that Danny witnesses without uttering a word.

Disillusion and bitterness towards British society and its economic system is taken one step further with the character of Papa (Roshan Seth), Omar's father, in Frear's earlier film *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985). Critics frequently dismissed the importance of this character in the film and Papa was often referred to in negative terms as 'a bed-ridden socialist father'

(Cook 1985, 332), 'a Pakistani journalist who forgets the death of his illusions with alcohol' (Leclère 1986b), 'a one-time left-wing journalist, now bedridden, mostly by gin and disillusion' (Robinson 1985/86, 67). Françoise Audé (1986b, 65) in *Positif* sketched the most negative portrait by describing Papa as 'powerless and alcoholic.[...] He is only here to criticise his son's initiatives and advise him to go to university and have access to knowledge. He is pathetic and full of himself'.



My Beautiful Laundrette: Papa (Roshan Seth) in bed: A fag and a Vodka to make the world bearable.

But the role of Papa needs to be recognised as central since he acts as one of the pivotal characters who appears seven times in short but regular scenes throughout *My Beautiful Laundrette*. One may consider Papa as an abhorrent character who spends his days with a bottle of vodka in one hand and a cigarette in the other while only depicting Britain in the darkest possible way: having his son suffering from unemployment ('He's on the dole like everyone else in England'), being a victim of racism ('They hate us in England') and blaming Britain for his own decline ('This damn country has done us in. That's why I'm like this. We should be there. Home'). However, with his long white hair, Papa symbolises the wise old man whose understanding of the world will prove to be more accurate than any of the others

at the end of the film. The close shots of Papa talking to Omar (Gordon Warnecke) in the opening scene, Omar passing his hand in his father's hair and cutting his toe nails underline the protective attitude of the son towards his decrepit father. Papa's disappointment and inner misery are translated by the high-angle shots which highlight his inability to react. Yet two powerful medium shots counterbalance his intellectual defeat with his humanity when Papa talks to Johnny while holding his hand, and in the last scene when Nasser comes to visit him. Papa symbolises what is left of moral values in 1980s Britain (albeit in a decrepit state) and acts as the embodiment of an alternative political vision. Although he is associated with inner space, he offers an exterior point of view on this world. Thus, he is the one who notices Johnny marching in the street and who sees Tania on the platform. It is no coincidence that he says of Omar: 'He must have knowledge. We all must, now. In order to see clearly what's being done and to whom in this country'. Papa's intellectual background as a journalist provides him with a certain authority in his reading of British contemporary society. His comments on the state of Britain, the problems of unemployment and more particularly on Omar's future therefore acquire a greater validity towards the audience.

2.1 - Freedom

Danny in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* and Hippo in *Un monde sans pitié* are characterized by a sense of freedom. Such a type of character is not new to French cinema and some of its most famous exponents are Boudu in *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (Jean Renoir, 1932), M. Hulot in *Mon oncle* (Jacques Tati, 1958) and Antoine Doinel in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968)⁴⁹. Not having the constraint of a nine-to-five job (as Nathalie says to Hippo 'You don't have a job, you don't have any schedule, I've got nothing to hang on to'), Danny and Hippo belong to the street and are mainly associated with outdoor shots when roaming in the streets of Paris and London. The first half of *Un monde sans pitié* establishes Hippo as belonging to the

streets of Paris thanks to extensive location shooting. Night and day, Hippo keeps moving inside the city, be it on foot or by car. His street life is associated with a romantic encounter (Nathalie), discussion with his friend Halpern and singing in his car.



Un monde sans pitié: Hippo (Hippolite Girardot) and Nathalie (Mireille Perrier) on a romantic walk in the streets of Paris.

Conversely, indoor shots connote constraint: his ex-girlfriend lecturing him, the electricity man, playing poker to earn his living. In that sense, Hippo's first visit to Nathalie's flat is telling. Nathalie refuses to kiss Hippo in the living room and carefully avoids any physical contact by sitting opposite him. Hippo then offers to take her out onto the balcony and the lights of the Eiffel tower as if by magic switch off as he clicks his fingers (in fact he has timed his clicking of the fingers to coincide with the lights going off). This 'magical' moment is followed by a pan shot over Paris at night while Hippo describes life on the rooftops in a poetic way. It is only after Hippo is associated again with Paris that he manages to seduce Nathalie and has his long-awaited kiss. Hippo refuses to follow Nathalie to the States because he feels in total symbiosis with Paris ('I know the streets, I know the people'). As for Danny, he is given the nickname of Victoria because he rides regularly on the Victoria line of the underground. This spatial and temporal freedom is echoed by a social freedom which allows

the two protagonists to select the people with whom they interact. For Claude-Marie Trémois (1997, 21) Hippo 'rarely laughs and his happiness is overwhelmed by sadness. A marginal man in a world which does not expect a new May '68, he knows that he is condemned to loneliness'. But Hippo is far from being condemned to loneliness as he values his friendship with Halpern and his brother (Jean-Marie Rollin). In fact, it is more accurate to consider that Hippo has chosen to set himself free, a philosophy which 'excludes him from a sense of citizenship' (Sineux 1989, 28) and a sense of duty related to it. In that sense, the experience of the singer Kate in *Breaking Glass* denounces the loss of personal freedom associated with financial success. Hippo and Danny, on the other hand, praise the notion of freedom as the only alternative against social disappointment. They refuse to be part of the official workforce because they are aware that their position would be at the bottom of the social ladder as none of them have any professional qualifications. Hence their decision to avoid comparison by remaining outside the social ladder. In 1980s cinema, freedom leads to the illusion of social equality. As Danny and Hippo are not on the social scale, comparison with working people is irrelevant. It is precisely their peculiar situation which enables them to mingle with people from other social categories and interact with them as equals. Such a situation can be witnessed in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* when Danny meets Sammy (an accountant) and Rosie (a carer and a PhD student) in their flat or in *Un monde sans pitié* during the conversation at Nathalie's place between Hippo's best friend and Nathalie's upper-class friends. But to be on an equal footing with people belonging to the middle class requires a special attention given to their appearance and in this respect Hippo's and Danny's sartorial elegance can be considered as a social disguise.

As a logical correlative, the freedom enjoyed by Danny and Hippo enables them to witness and comment on society. Although film critic Louise Sweet (1988, 21) considers that Danny 'has no clear role in this highly diagrammatic film', I would argue that on the contrary Danny

has the clear-cut role of a privileged witness of the social and economic predicament. By remaining outside the constraints of work, both Danny and Hippo possess a spatial and temporal freedom which enables them to turn into observers. This characteristic (shared by Danny and Hippo) is conveyed by numerous point-of-view shots. As Jill Forbes (1987/88, 65) wrote about Danny, 'He contrives to be present at every significant event, when the police raid the house of the woman who had minded him as a child, when the speculative bulldozers [...] move in and clear the site under the motorway'. In fact Hippo and Danny can be considered as the new *flâneur* of the 20th century whose activity has been described by Schlör (1998, 124): 'Combining the world of goods (exhibited in shop windows) and the opportunity to stroll became the symbol of metropolitan life in the early 19th century'. Yet, here their constant strolling in Paris or London is not associated with consumerism, which both Hippo and Danny reject, but with the opportunity to observe and interact with people.

The image of the artist and the intellectual in French films insists on their refusal to believe in the yuppie values of the 1980s as human feelings were more important than money. And most of all, the priority had to be given to a more convivial society privileging people over consumerism. French films therefore focused on artists and intellectuals who managed to live in keeping with their ethic principles, while soliciting the audience's admiration for their lifestyle. Besides, extensive location shooting within central Paris adds an energetic and stimulating visual element to their way of life. By contrast, the same way of life of artists and intellectuals in British films is visually associated with the economic deprivation surrounding them. Life in a wasteland, shots of beggars on the streets, the voiceover of radio news announcing the rise of unemployment contribute to a desolate portrayal of 1980s Britain. Whereas the discourse about the state of society was lightened up by a pleasant *mise en scène* in the French films, in the British films this discourse was visually illustrated by a depressing cityscape.

IV - ETHNIC MINORITIES

The colonial concept that immigrants were brought over to solve the problem of the shortage of manual labour after the Second World War contributed to the presence of immigrants being perceived in relation to work. In the 1970s and the 1980s, when the economic situation drastically changed and that extra-workforce was not required anymore, the racist fringe of the population sometimes questioned the presence of the two generations of immigrants. In Britain, urban unrest led to violent confrontations between youth and the police forces, for instance in Bristol (April 1980), in the Brixton and Southall areas of London and in the Toxteth area of Liverpool (April 1981) and in the Handsworth area of Birmingham (from September to October 1985). Debates followed as to the link these upheavals had to racism while considerable disagreement centred around the role played by social deprivation and unemployment in bringing young people to protest violently on the streets (Solomos 1993, 147-79). In what Coco Fusco (1995, 316) considered as 'a watershed moment in the history of British race relations', British citizens from ethnic minorities became more and more aware that they were united by a common past of colonialism and racism from the host community. As a result, there was a shift of the category 'black' from a biological or racial category to a political term of identification⁵⁰ (Julien and Mercer 1988, 3). In France, the 1980s corresponded to the beginning of a period of conflict in the *banlieues* which culminated in the early 1990s. France's largest ethnic minority consisted of people of North African origin whose children born in France were referred to as *beur* (backslang for 'Arabe'). The riots which took place in the *banlieue* of Lyons during the summer of 1981 marked the first major protest of the decade. It was followed in 1983 by the '*Marche des beurs*' when young Arabs from the second generation walked from Marseilles to Paris, a symbol of their quest for acceptance into French society⁵¹. The debate concerning the terminology *beur* was contested by the *beurs* themselves as a barrier against their integration considering that it echoed an in-

between situation where they were neither French nor North African⁵². Film director Malik Chibane (Bouquet 1994, 11) explains why he disapproves of this label: *beur* cinema refers to a way of understanding society through a communal tradition which contributes to the idea of ghettos present in Anglo-American countries whereas French society is based on the idea of 'integration'. However, for the sake of convenience as well as a common use of this terminology among scholars, the term *beur* will be used in this dissertation. As the level of unemployment was high in the 1980s, tension grew in the *banlieues* where the second generation refused to remain the first victims of the economic crisis while claiming better social integration and more equality at work.

The 1980s were a decade when immigrant communities in France and Britain became 'visible' in the media, including cinema. As Pierre Sorlin (2000, 89) points out, 'The pictures of the 1980s and the 1990s were [...] a shock because they depicted a divided, scattered population and revealed new communities of immigrant origin'. In the wake of the 1981 riots, black film workshops like the Black Audio Film Collective, Sankofa Film and Video and Ceddo Film and Video workshop were given greater financial support. A considerable number of films were made in these workshops largely using the avant-garde style as in *The Passion of Remembrance* (Julien and Blackwood, 1986) and *Territories* (Sankofa Film and Video, 1986). In France, the election of the Socialist Party also gave hope for the ethnic minorities to be heard. The representation of the Arab community in 1970s cinema was primarily recorded by North African directors such as Ali Ghalem (*Mektoub*, 1970 and *L'Autre France*, 1974), Ali Akika (*Voyage en capital*, 1977) and Djouhra Abouda (*Ali au pays des merveilles*, 1975). While few immigrants from the first generation were involved in any formal artistic activities, the second generation suddenly was in the limelight and made itself heard.

Scholars have given a lot of attention to the representation of the second generation in French and British cinemas. The majority of articles focuses on the question of identity in France

(Tarr 1993, 321-42 and 1997, 65-72, Rosello 1998) and in Britain (Malik 1996, 202-15, Dhillon-Kashyap 1988, 120-6) and the production and reception of black films in Britain (Mercer ed. 1988, Pines 1996, 183-207). In fact, very little has been published in relation to the ethnic communities and the issue of work and unemployment. Abbas Fahdel (1990, 140-51) notes that the *cinéma beur* ignores the presence of young professionals among the second generation. Christian Bosséno (1992, 47-57) mentions that proper integration can only be achieved thanks to social and professional success. Offering a portrayal of the immigrant in French cinema, Michel Cadé (1993, 251-67) refers to the dual image of the ethnic community, either as bringing disorder within society in the case of the second generation or as the guardian of traditional values such as work and solidarity for the first generation. Since Cadé's article does not focus particularly on the 1980s and only mentions these features briefly, this section will further develop this point. As far as the representation of the British ethnic communities was concerned, the issue of work and unemployment was only discussed in relation to the work of a particular filmmaker, for instance Stephen Frears by John Hill (1999a, 205-18) and Torrey Barber (1993, 221-35). This can be largely explained by the fact that few British filmmakers took an interest in representing unemployment among the ethnic communities, focusing instead on white working-class characters as in *Meantime* or *Looks and Smiles*.

This section examines the representation of the ethnic communities in relation to work and unemployment, first in terms of the first generation and then of the second generation in French and British films. The idea that the first generation of immigrants were hard-working and associated with manual labour remained strong in the 1980s. And the two national cinemas mostly used their presence as 'workers in the background'. The issue of unemployment was more directly linked to the second generation. However, instead of focusing on the lack of job opportunity, French films insisted on the notion of equality and

social climbing and British films on the idea of unfair dismissal in the black communities and self-employment within the Asian community. In an attempt to understand how the setting of these films in the immigrant communities influences the representation of work and unemployment, this section will look in particular at *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (1985) and *Romuald et Juliette* (1989) while mentioning films such as *Black Mic Mac* (1986), *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir* (1987), *Babylon* (1980), *Burning an Illusion* (1981) and *Meantime* (1983).

1 - The 'older' generation

During the 1950s and 1960s, all advanced European countries experienced a labour shortage and large-scale immigration took place, inspired by the colonial past of these countries. Although immigrant workers from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia had been included in the French labour workforce since the beginning of the twentieth century, their permanent settlement was a more recent phenomenon. Black and North African immigrants who settled in France in the 1960s and 1970s were directed towards manual labour. In Britain, it was mainly people belonging to the so-called New Commonwealth who came over to work. The end of the Second World War, the need to rebuild some cities and the economic boom which followed, all contributed to the mass arrival of immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s. In France, the then traditional image of an immigrant was of a manual worker with little professional qualifications, an image 'grounded in the sociological fact that most immigrants from (former) colonies are indeed from poorly educated, often rural backgrounds, and the jobs they have found in France have generally been unskilled and badly-paid' (Hargreaves and Mc Kinney 1997, 8). In Britain, while white British workers enjoyed upward mobility in the service sector and emergent industries, immigrants were given 'unskilled and routine semi-skilled jobs at the lower levels of the labour market. These were often dirty, poorly paid, and

involved unsocial hours like night shift working' (Mason 2000, 23). As Salman Rushdie (1991, 133) likes to point out, immigrants from the New Commonwealth 'came because they were invited. The Macmillan government embarked on a large-scale advertising campaign to attract them. They were extraordinary advertisements, full of hope and optimism, which made Britain out to be a land of plenty, a golden opportunity not to be missed. And they worked'.

In both national cinemas, the middle-aged ethnic minorities were rarely seen on screen and they usually played secondary characters, as if their presence was simply considered as a necessary ingredient for a more realistic background. The representation of the older generation was frequently associated with the cliché of the immigrant without any professional qualifications. Thus, in *Black Mic Mac* (1986) the mother runs a small African restaurant in the 20th arrondissement of Paris, Asian middle-aged men in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987) work as taxi drivers, North Africans and Asians are depicted as corner shop owners in *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. The Arab father is a dustman in *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir* (Serge Meynard, 1987) and the group of Tunisians encountered by Mona works as labourers in *Sans toit ni loi* (Agnès Varda, 1985). In this respect, giving the central role to a black middle-aged cleaner, played by Firmine Richard, in *Romuald et Juliette* (1989) is unusual in French cinema while the important role of the middle-aged Asian entrepreneur played by Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey) in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) also deserves attention.

Romuald et Juliette throws into question not only the issue of unemployment in Romuald's case but also the representation of the older generation of workers with Juliette. Frequently described by film critics as a utopian vision of a love story, this modern fairy tale depicts the relationship between Juliette, a black Caribbean cleaning lady, and her white boss Romuald (Daniel Auteuil). Dina Sherzer's (1999, 151) interpretation is that '[Juliette] seems to fit the stereotype of the single black mother with five children living in a housing project, but then

Serreau counters this stereotype and makes Juliette a hard-working woman, not a mother living on welfare benefits'. Although the stereotype of the unemployed black character did exist in 1980s French cinema, I would argue that it largely applied to the younger generation but not to the older one to which Juliette belongs. Thus, Brigitte Rollet (1998, 83) rightly writes about Juliette that 'she illustrates the merit and values of the 'deserving poor''⁵³. The way Coline Serreau alters stereotypes in her depiction of Juliette does not concern the character's social position but is due to her exceptional cleverness. Even if Juliette is filmed at work with her green outfit pushing her trolley, she is no ordinary cleaning lady but ends up acting as a secret agent. Behind the fairy tale elements of the narrative, Serreau equally provides a detailed analysis of Juliette's working conditions and the documentary precision of the narrative highlights the difficulties of her daily routine. Progressively, the difficulties of her work, evoked during the opening scene, fade away and are replaced by the opportunity given to Juliette for eavesdropping. In fact, Juliette appears to be too intelligent for a manual job and the colour of her skin as well as her strong Caribbean accent can be understood as part of the explanation for her position. Whereas the example of Juliette as the main character was unusual, the portrayal of the immigrant mother was more frequently included as a secondary character. And most women belonging to the older generation were presented as housewives and mothers in French and British cinemas but they were indirectly concerned by unemployment or the importance to remain employed through the experience of their children. Thus, in *Le Thé à la menthe* (Abdelkrim Bahloul, 1984), *Laisse béton* (Serge Le Peron, 1984), *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (Mehdi Charef, 1985), *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir* (Serge Meynard, 1987), *Babylon* (Franco Rosso, 1980), *Burning an Illusion* (Menelik Shabazz, 1981) and *The Chain* (Jack Gold, 1984), the mother's role is to maintain the social cement which is gradually disappearing with the increase of unemployment. Largely associated with the domestic space, the mother creates a place which secures a harbour

against the economic tension of the outside world while enhancing a feeling of solidarity with the younger generation.

In *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the character of Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey) plays an important role. Located in the Asian community in London, *My Beautiful Laundrette* is first of all the coming of age of Omar (Gordon Warnecke) both on a professional and personal level. Nasser, Omar's uncle, hires the young man during the summer and makes him discover what the enterprise culture means in 80s Britain. A garage owner and a heartless landlord, Nasser explains to one of his tenants: 'We're professional businessmen. Not professional Pakistanis. There's no race question in the new enterprise culture'. This dismissal of race is not as simple when it comes to gratuitous racism and this issue will be treated later. Nasser's professional activity is a particularly telling example since it represents a wider reality. As Michael Keith (1995, 356) explains, the two stereotypical characters of the inner cities are 'the ethnic entrepreneur and the street rebel' who 'become sublime personalities with iconic status'. Keith further explains that the ethnic entrepreneur is seen as 'the assimilationist hero'. In *My Beautiful Laundrette*, during Omar's first invitation to his uncle's place the *mise en scène* of Nasser's house insists on his financial success. Through Omar's point of view, the audience is given a guided tour of the house, first in the women's living room, then to the group of men in the next room. The depth-of-field used to film this room is enhanced by Omar's cousin standing outside the window showing her breast. Finally, the next shot from the game room offers a global view of Nasser's house, echoed by Omar's comment about Nasser's prosperity. In the case of Nasser, even if he considers that he has successfully managed to take advantage of Thatcherism, his 'assimilationist' hero image is tainted by illegality such as racketing and Rackmanism.

With the exception of Nasser and Juliette, the older generation remained largely under-represented in 1980s French and British cinemas, especially if one thinks in terms of important roles. This characteristic of the two cinemas was also found in films dealing more

particularly with issues of unemployment. This lack of interest for the older generation in relation to work echoed the general attitude of politicians and the media who focused mainly on unemployment and the youth, as if older people belonging to the ethnic communities only represented a temporal problem which could be resolved by itself — that is to say, when they reached retirement age.

2 - The second generation

Most of the youths of the second generation were born and educated in Europe. In France, the message of equality proclaimed by the Socialist Party when it came to power brought hope to the younger generation and one of the major governmental arguments was to develop a more democratic access to employment through 'education for all'. Despite this public statement, unemployment increased in the 1980s and the immigrants' second generation largely remained outside the labour market since being young and belonging to the ethnic minority made them the first victims of the economic situation. A more general overview shows that in the *banlieue*, the second generation was confronted with similar problems of unemployment as their Caucasian neighbours. In Britain, the highest rate of unemployment was found among the ethnic minorities. However, black men were more affected by unemployment than Asian ones and unemployment rate was similar among women from various ethnic communities (Mason 2000, 47). Encouraged by the Thatcher government, self-employment was often considered as 'a way for minority groups to avoid the effects of discrimination in the labour market' (Mason 2000, 54).

In French and British films of the 1980s, the issue of unemployment facing the second generation was generally associated with life in the *banlieue* and the inner cities. As noted by Susan Hayward (1993a, 288), representation of unemployment among the immigrants' second generation was rarely reflected in French films with the exception of *beur* cinema which

contributed to the creation of 'the new popular realism of the 1980s'. In French cinema, the gap between the older and the second generations of immigrants in relation to work was typified by the refusal of the younger generation to have a manual job. Having received the same education as any other French person, they considered that they deserved a similar treatment in the labour market. Hence, Madjid in *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* meets the misunderstanding of his mother when he refuses to go to the *Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi* (French equivalent of the job centre). Symbolically, Rachid (Smain) contradicts his father who does not understand the aspirations of his son ('if you're ashamed of your father's work, you're ashamed of your father') in *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir*. In *Le Thé à la menthe*, for six years Hamou (Abdel Kechiche) lives in the hope of having a dreamlike existence rather than accepting a badly-paid job. Similarly in *Un amour à Paris* (Merzak Allouache, 1988), Ali (Karim Allaoui) remains unemployed and keeps dreaming about working for the NASA. And in *Baton Rouge* (Rachid Bouchareb, 1985), three friends (two *beurs* and a white one) also pursue their dreams and go to the United States. This widespread characteristic of *beur* cinema may be considered as what Christian Bosseno (1992, 50) identifies as 'the need to escape', the refusal of the second generation to enter the labour market unless the offer is worth the effort. This position encapsulates their evolution from the previous generation, depicted as hard-working immigrants unable to understand the aspirations of their offspring.

In British cinema, the aspirations of the second generation were quite similar in their frustration towards manual positions. But instead of introducing them as unemployed characters, the focus was placed on their unfair dismissal. In *Burning an Illusion*, a brief introductory scene shows Del (Victor Romero) at work as a toolmaker. The antagonism of his white boss in the background is highlighted by constant eye contact between the two men and the shot reverse shot technique increases the conflictual atmosphere. Later in the narrative, Del's dismissal on racist grounds needs no further explanation. In *Babylon*, the racist motive

of the white garage owner is made more explicit when he addresses David (Brinsley Forde) as 'a monkey' as he sacks him from his job as a mechanic, following David's demand to have his legal lunch break. The quick editing and the mobility of the handheld camera insist on David's anger. And *Eat the Rich* (Peter Richardson, 1987) opens with black waiter Alex (Lanah Pelly) being fired from a London restaurant while *Fords on Water* (Barry Bliss, 1983) shows Winston (Elvis Payne) being made redundant from his training position as a draughtsman.

2.1 - Case study: *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède*

Now considered filmic touchstones in their depiction of the immigrant communities, *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (two small-budget films which met unexpected critical acclaim) will be taken as case studies. Released the same year (1985), both films focus on unemployed young men in a deprived area of their capital city. The chance meeting in *My Beautiful Laundrette* between two former school friends, Omar (Gordon Warnecke) and Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis), develops into a renewed friendship as well as a love affair while *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* is a slice of Madjid's (Kader Boukharef) and Pat's (Remi Martin) everyday lives on a suburban council estate. The two films deal with the coming of age of the protagonists (even if Johnny is slightly older than the three others) and their confrontation with the difficulties of finding a decent job. The ethnic difference between the two friends, either white French and *beur* or white British and Asian, is highlighted by the blondness (natural or not in Johnny's case) of Pat's and Johnny's hair contrasting with their friends' dark hair. However, this physical difference is softened in *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* by a similar gait, clothes and stature while Johnny's strength and agility is counterbalanced by Omar's awkwardness. The camera in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, with its jerky movements, its mobility as well as the quick pace of the film taking the audience from one scene to another with a certain urgency, conveys Omar and Johnny's need

for action. The quick tempo of the film during the eviction scenes, quickly moving from indoor to outdoor shots, shock cuts (for example cutting from the skinheads' violence on the laundrette's roof to Papa's silent room) and vivid colours all contribute to the depiction of a chaotic world. Through Omar's point of view, the mood swings from despair to humour and self-derision. As scriptwriter Hanif Kureishi (Root 1985, 333) explained, 'satire and irony are probably the only ways we can approach the complex problems of our time. At the moment everything is so horrific that if you wrote straight social realism people wouldn't be able to bear to watch it'. For Omar and Johnny, action is needed since such a good opportunity will not present itself twice. By contrast, in *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* the camera takes its time to follow Madjid and Pat's meandering walks. Here the characters' movements reflect the passing of time and lack of opportunities, without being 'a miserabilist, populist or naturalist film' (Siclier 1985b). What prevents Madjid and Pat from drowning in despair is the strength of their friendship and the solidarity of the *cité* (council estate) in which they live. During their brief period of employment in a workshop, Pat's rebellion against this repetitive task is silently witnessed by Madjid. Yet, despite the close shot of Madjid's face, it remains impossible to read his mind. The next shot shows Pat slowly walking away from the workshop when the silent soundtrack is suddenly filled with Madjid's whistling at Pat while running after him. This act of solidarity plays down the possibility of sentimentality but is metaphorically expressed in the following scene when Pat and Madjid share the bread and chocolate that they have just stolen. In the workshop scene, there is a sudden contrast between the freedom experienced by Madjid and Pat so far and their staying at the same place to do a repetitive action under the boss's supervision. This spatial contrast underlines the discrepancy between the ability of the two young men to have their own way in their unemployed time and the role they are expected to play at work. The fact that Madjid and Pat do not have the

necessary qualifications to apply for a more challenging position does not mean that they could accept a manual job, especially since they do not consider it as a valuable activity.

Whereas in the 1980s mainstream French comedies such as *Viens chez moi, j'habite chez une copine* and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* dealt with the idea of making the best out of a desperate situation, unemployment was experienced through a more dramatic social and cultural prism among the ethnic communities in the so-called *films de banlieue*. These films focused more on the importance of climbing the social ladder than on unemployment itself. What became the main issue was not to find a job but to find a position superior to the manual job occupied by parents (see, for instance, in *Romuald et Juliette* Juliette's son telling his mother that he doesn't want to become a cleaner like her). The emphasis was therefore put on the notion of pride and the need for social recognition. There was a call for a more egalitarian society. And the consequence of unemployment was that it made social climbing even more difficult for ethnic minorities. In British films, the depiction of ethnic minorities varied according to whether the character was black or Asian. In the case of black people, it was not so much the high rate of unemployment which was discussed than the notion of equality at work. What films such as *Babylon* and *Burning an Illusion* illustrated was that black people refused to be treated unfairly anymore despite economic circumstances. As for the Asian community, depiction in films was not so much about unemployment, as about finding new opportunities for work outside the traditional manual working-class areas. In this sense, if there was a pervasive pessimism in British films of the 1980s, a residual optimism resided in the creativity and entrepreneurialism of the Asian community.

2.2 - The influence of unemployment on youth relationships

French and British films dealing with unemployment afflicting ethnic minorities put forward the idea that the lack of money and enforced leisure of the younger generation intensified their

resentment towards an unfair society. Adopting discourses which, here again, were poles apart, French films emphasized solidarity⁵⁴ within the *banlieue* whereas British films explored racism in the inner cities.

Although in the 1980s the media sketched a less than flattering portrait of the *banlieue* as a place where criminality and violence dominated, the *film de banlieue* provided a more balanced depiction which focused on the human dimension of its inhabitants. As noted by Michel Cadé 1999, 180), 'in the eye of the camera the *banlieue* is defined through solidarity and fraternity, without ignoring the damage caused by unemployment and drugs'. Most of the films set in the *banlieue* were based on the friendship between white, male, immigrant (sometimes second generation) youths: *La Smala* (Jean-Loup Hubert, 1983), *Laisse béton* (Serge Le Péron, 1984), *Baton Rouge* (Rachid Bouchareb, 1985), *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (Mehdi Charef, 1985), *De bruit et de fureur* (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 1987), *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir* (Serge Meynard, 1987). Françoise Audé (Bosséno 1990, 146) referring to the optimism of *beur* cinema made an interesting point concerning the way *beur* films were close to traditional French comedies. In French films set in the *banlieue*, the lack of job opportunities reinforced a feeling of solidarity between white and ethnic youths. Their passive attitude towards the labour market is counterbalanced by small-scale, illegal ways of earning easy money. As a consequence, they work out how to improve their everyday lives, while being aware that their economic situation is bound to remain the same. Mehdi Charef brilliantly exploits this idea in the comic métro scene in *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* where Pat steals a wallet from a man's back pocket, moves away and leaves the car at the next station while the 'innocent' Madjid is automatically accused by the racist man. As Mireille Rosello (1998, 58) explains, 'The stroke of genius in this case is that Madjid is at the same time guilty of an act of theft and the victim of a stereotype that accuses all the people in his community of being thieves'. These *films de banlieue* insist on young people in the *banlieue*

projecting their anger towards 'people outside the *cité*'. Thus, when racism is evoked, it takes place between youths from the *banlieue* and 'outsiders' in what Christian Bosséno (1992, 50) interestingly identifies as anti-youth racism rather than anti-North-African racism. It is also worth noting that all these films set in the *banlieue* picture two male characters in the main roles while excluding female characters, a feature that can be explained by the fact that girls in the *cité* are expected to remain at home by their family.

As underlined by journalist Marcia Pally (1986, 53) 'the French film *Thé au harem* is similar to *Laundrette* in exploring relations between white and North-African kids in Paris. Yet there's no racial tension'. It is precisely on this particular aspect that the representation of the second generation strongly differs. Although the cross-race friendship in the *films de banlieue* is equally present in British films such as *Babylon* (Franco Rosso, 1980), *Made in Britain* (Alan Clarke, 1983), *Fords on Water* (Barry Bliss, 1983) and *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), racism occupies a predominant position in what is presented as a fragmented British society. The victims of new economic circumstances in decaying urban areas are filmed fighting against one another as unemployed white youths resent the second generation for taking away their jobs⁵⁵. Street racism is represented in the opening scene of *Fords on Water* where Winston (Elvis Payne) is violently assaulted by a group of white youths on no other grounds than the colour of his skin. Yet scenes of gratuitous racism often include youths belonging to a fascist movement such as Coxy (Gary Oldman) in *Meantime*, the National Front's demonstration during the Rock against Racism 1984 concert in *Breaking Glass*, Johnny's former skinhead friends in *My Beautiful Laundrette* and Trevor (Tim Roth) in *Made in Britain*. Extremely close shots of Trevor's face with a swastika tattooed on his forehead accompanied by a loud and aggressive soundtrack leave no choice for the audience but to follow the odyssey of hatred of this young skinhead from court to another racist attack on a Pakistani family house. Alternating camera shots from crowd level to high-angle shots

during the clash between ethnic youths and National Front members in *Breaking Glass* proves highly disturbing while reaching a horrendous climax when a young man is stabbed to death and dies in the singer's arms.

In British films set in the inner cities, both white and ethnic youths refuse to accept their fate. They consider unemployment as abnormal and therefore something has to be done. As mentioned above, a frequent reaction in British films is to put the blame on 'the other' as responsible for increasing the level of unemployment and become a fascist. For instance, in *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Meantime*, Johnny and Coxy (Gary Oldman) are two white and unemployed working-class young men turned fascist. Yet, this first reaction against the other is followed by an introspective movement when the protagonists assess themselves. Johnny comes to realize that he has no qualifications to enter the labour market and Coxy becomes mad as he is too weak psychologically to cope with his situation as a drop out. In an essay entitled *England, Your England*, scriptwriter Hanif Kureishi (1989, 28) explains that racism in 1980s Britain was triggered 'when that superiority of class and culture is unsure or not acknowledged by the Other but is in doubt, as with the British working class and Pakistanis in England, then it has to be demonstrated physically'. And *My Beautiful Laundrette* illustrates this aspect of racism through the characters of former fascist Johnny and Asian Omar. Alienated from society, Johnny is offered a new chance of integration through Omar's creation of a job for him at a turning point in his life. As Pierre Sorlin (1991, 197) points out, although Johnny 'used to demonstrate for the expulsion of immigrants because he had no job, he eventually understands that given his lack of education and social background he will never be offered a decent salary even if Asians are swept out'. The irony of the situation is based on a stereotypical reversal of the colonial image found in 1980s heritage films since this time it is the Asian character who brings back the white one into a more civilised world through work.



My Beautiful Laundrette: Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis) ashamed to take Omar's (Gordon Warnecke) money.

For Pam Cook (1985, 333) 'Johnny has mixed motives in accepting a role as Omar's employee and subordinate — partly out of a desire to expiate his former National Front activities, partly out of love, and partly just in order to work'. Even if *My Beautiful Laundrette* has been conceived as an attack on Thatcher's free enterprise spirit ⁵⁶, the experience of Omar and Johnny illustrates how the tension between the white underclass and the Asian community can be settled through a common upward mobility. In that sense, the laundrette (called Powders in reference to money from heroin dealing 'laundered' to start Omar's business) becomes a symbol of Thatcher's 'service' industries. Through their personal experiences Omar and Johnny are the living proof that one can achieve a better social status through hard work and ambition in 1980s Britain which can then be seen as the 'land of plenty' suggested earlier by Salman Rushdie (1991, 133). Despite the threat of racism hovering above their heads (visually illustrated by the domineering presence of Johnny's former fascist friends on the laundrette's roof), the association of Omar and Johnny through work and love ironically symbolises the revenge of the poor against an unfair society.

Fascism as the ultimate reaction against unemployment is also illustrated by Coxy in *Meantime*. Coxy's image of a good-looking and energetic young man endowed also with a charismatic personality makes his refusal to integrate into society even more powerful. In the first half of the film Coxy and his skinhead friends symbolically express their lack of faith in the authorities by hanging around outside the Social Security Office while Mark, Colin and their father are in the dole queue. Another scene showing Coxy and Colin sharing a lift with a young black man insists on the black man's immediate reaction on seeing Coxy which is to give him a friendly smile as a way of protecting himself. Tension increases in the lift which is expressed in a succession of extremely brief close shots of the three protagonists and threatening silence. Stressing the crude lighting and graffiti, the *mise en scène* also contributes to creating a climate of violence. Surprisingly, after insulting the black man Coxy is taken aback when the man talks back to him and tension suddenly vanishes into a humorous twist, in which Coxy's violence is ridiculed. Filmed on his own in the street, Coxy lives in a no man's land after unemployment has alienated him from society. Praised by Michael Coveney (1997, 174) for the way 'the sapping, debilitating and demeaning state of unemployment, the futile sense of waste, has not been more poignantly, or poetically, expressed in any other film of the period', the last scene shows Coxy rolling around in a tin drum. The static shot gives the impression that Coxy cannot escape from his situation despite his continuous violent movements inside the tin drum — caught as he is in a vicious circle. Unlike the usual representation of National Front members which tends to focus on their lack of human feelings, Coxy's social alienation is shown to lead him to psychological alienation and madness. Replacing a didactic discourse by meaningful shots, the example of Coxy efficiently denounces youth unemployment and deprivation in the inner cities.

Since the high rate of unemployment was taken for granted among the ethnic communities in British and French films, what the films addressed was the attitude of the protagonists

towards work on a more abstract level, in particular their demands for equality. In comparison with the representation of work in mainstream French comedies where the protagonists readily accepted any kind of solutions, in the *films de banlieue* the main point was to climb the social ladder. The notion of personal pride was stronger than finding a job at all cost. In British films, such a feature was also perceptible in the black communities which requested a fairer treatment at the workplace. As for the representation of the Asian community, it offered the sharpest contrast in its treatment of unemployment and work in 1980s Britain. Unlike the white working class whose unemployment problems originated in the policies of the state, the Asian community illustrated the opportunity for grassroots individual action to combat the situation and create new economic and social environments for future progress (even if one bears in mind that Omar's laundrette was financed by ill-earned money). While white workers clung to a political solution which was essentially one of state funding and the retrieval of jobs, the Asian experience somehow offered a sense of optimism for the future.

V - FROM THE 1980s TO THE 1990s

The contrast in attitude to work and unemployment between French and British cinemas of the 1980s is perhaps best highlighted by the shift in narrative technique and genre which many scholars have noted in the 1990s films. In this comparative study, it is impossible to ignore the 'relative' reversal that took place between French and British cinemas as regards the treatment of unemployment and social issues between the 1980s and the 1990s. As Claire Monk (2000, 276) explains, there was a major change in the way images of the underclass in British cinema became appealing and exportable themes in the 1990s. Taking the example of Peter Cattaneo's *The Full Monty* (1997), she argues that the 'transformation of feel-bad subject matter (redundancy, economic desperation, divorce, despair, impotence, loss of family, loss of self-esteem) into feel-good comedy is the quintessential example of this process'. As noted by

Phil Powrie (1999, 16), an opposite process took place in several French films which showed an evident engagement with social reality comparable to the cinema of Mike Leigh and Ken Loach.

Whereas the presence of well-known *café-théâtre* actors (Michel Blanc, Gérard Lanvin, Josiane Balasko, Anémone) strongly contributed to the success of 1980s French films dealing with social issues, in the 1990s French directors tended to choose unknown or young actors at the start of their career, such as Sandrine Kiberlain in *En avoir ou pas* (Laetitia Masson, 1995), Virginie Ledoyen in *La Fille seule* (Benoît Jacquot, 1995), Guillaume Depardieu in *Les Apprentis* (Pierre Salvatori, 1995) and Elodie Boucher and Natacha Régnier in *La Vie rêvée des anges* (Erick Zonca, 1998). By contrast, British actors who were making their debut in the 1980s had quite an established reputation by the 1990s and actors such as Ewan McGregor in *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996) and *Brassed Off* (Mark Herman, 1996), David Thewlis in *Naked* (Mike Leigh, 1993) and Robert Carlyle in *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997), *Riff Raff* (Ken Loach, 1990) and *Trainspotting* became financial guarantees for film producers. In terms of aesthetics, British films departed even more from the traditional realistic genre of social problem films. For instance, films like *Trainspotting* and *Twentyfourseven* (Shane Meadows, 1999) include a new set of filming techniques (slow motion, surreal effects, long static shots, voice-over narration, polished images) in British social films which combine a realist/non realist dichotomy between the thematic and the aesthetic. The use of popular music contributes to lightening up the action while the blurring of genres continues by including comedy elements such as the typical dole queue turned into a dance scene in *The Full Monty*. A reverse tendency can be noticed in French films which adopt a more realist filming technique through a linear narrative, a subdued soundtrack and realist aesthetics. As far as location is concerned, several French films were shot in Northern France, an area severely hit by economic recession. Thus, *Nord* (Xavier Beauvois, 1992)

states explicitly its location, *La Vie de Jésus* (Bruno Dumont, 1997) takes place in a small Northern town, *En avoir ou pas* starts in a fish factory in Boulogne-sur-mer and *La Vie rêvée des anges* is set in an industrial area of Lille.

Thematically, similar conclusions can be drawn between the two decades. As John Hill (1999a, 166) wrote, in 1980s British social films 'there is virtually no representation of 'community' as such and very few images of collective action'. This absence of a working community spirit brought by industrial crisis in the 1980s was replaced in the 1990s by a renewed sense of solidarity using other means than work: setting up a boxing club in *TwentyFourSeven* (1999), a football team in *My Name is Joe* (Ken Loach, 1998), a strip tease in *The Full Monty* and a last revival of a miners' brass band in *Brassed Off* (1996). In order to do so, the 1990s British protagonists seem to follow in the steps of the 1980s French characters by using small illegal devices such as stealing football kits in *My Name is Joe* and setting up a male strip tease in *The Full Monty*. By contrast, the feel-good factor of 1980s French films was replaced by a feeling of alienation. The family structure, often considered the main unit in French society, frequently disappeared from French social films of the 1990s. In *En avoir ou pas* (1995), Alice (Sandrine Kiberlain) loses her job and decides to start afresh in Lyon but lack of employment opportunities turns her new life into an endless drift in the city. Similarly, Marie (Natacha Régnier) and Isa (Elodie Boucher) only associate through misery and lack of better opportunities in *La Vie rêvée des anges* (1998). *Les Apprentis* (1995) shows how the struggle for money leads one of the protagonists (François Cluzet) to mental breakdown.

Although people's life in 1980s French cinema dealing with questions of unemployment was far from flawless, love always gave a sense of the exceptional. A major change in 1990s French cinema was that love no longer solved economic problems: Alice's life (*En avoir ou pas*) is not transformed after her meeting with Bruno, Marie (*La Vie rêvée des anges*) is taken

advantage of by an unscrupulous young man and Fred's (Guillaume Depardieu) romantic idea of a love story is destroyed by his encounter with a young naive-looking girl who turns out to be a sexual pervert (*Les Apprentis*). But disillusion concerning love reaches a higher level with *La Fille seule* (1995) where the heroine deliberately decides to have a child by herself since she does not believe in love anymore. Interestingly, the cliché of the importance of love occupied a more central place in 1990s British films. As John Hill (2000a, 181) notes about Ken Loach's films of that decade 'romance in these films is shown to offer redemptive possibilities, providing characters with the opportunity to change or to discover new aspects of themselves'. This evolution was found in a number of 1990s British films, yet one of the most striking examples was *Brassed Off*, where social crisis was strongly counterbalanced by the love story between Gloria (Tara Fitzgerald) and Andy (Ewan McGregor) which becomes central to the story towards the end. Without taking this comparison too far as the two national cinemas retained their specificities, a swap took place in the way the issue of unemployment was referred to in 1980s French cinema and 1990s British cinema. As far as French cinema was concerned, this swap can be partly explained by a return to a more realist type of cinema after the 1980s, in the way that the 1970s was more obviously anchored in its social context through genres such as cinéma vérité. As for British cinema, the 1990s saw the emergence of British actors, such as Tim Roth, Gary Oldman, Robert Carlyle and Daniel Day-Lewis, who started in small-budget realist films in the 1980s and participated to the construction of a trendy image of British cinema in the 1990s.

This latter shift in the two national cinemas does indeed demonstrate some of the essential differences inherent to British and French films of the 1980s in their treatment of unemployment, unfair dismissal, racism, the economic situation of the ethnic minorities and refusal to join the labour market. Whereas unemployment was part of mainstream cinema in France (*Viens chez moi j'habite chez une copine*, *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*, *Le Père*

Noël est une ordure, *Romuald et Juliette*, *La Smala*), it remained within a more intellectually-oriented cinema in Britain — especially with the arrival of films commissioned or partly financed by Channel Four (*Meantime*, *Fords on Water*, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, *A Letter to Brezhnev*). Even if the question of genre was not as clear-cut as it used to be, what characterized French cinema was the presence of a feel-good factor as the evolution of the labour market was shown in a positive light. Being made redundant brings the opportunity to become aware of one's love (*Romuald et Juliette*), living on unemployment benefit is connected with taking advantage of the state (*La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*, *Le Père Noël est une ordure* and *La Comédie du travail*) and suffering from unemployment is counterbalanced by the importance of friendship (*Viens chez moi j'habite chez une copine*, *Marche à l'ombre* and *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède*). Thus, the portrait of French society depicted in these films is not ultimately pessimistic as professional hardship frequently provides an opportunity to 'bounce back'. By contrast, British cinema was more pessimistic, while it underlined the strength of its characters to fight in order to survive. Latent or on-screen violence is often incorporated in the narrative. These acts of rebellion take various forms and are represented on different levels: political (*Business as Usual*), intellectual (*Burning an Illusion*, *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*), physical or verbal (*Babylon*, *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, *Looks and Smiles*) or economic (*My Beautiful Laundrette*).

One of the main differences between the two national cinemas was the optimistic (utopian sometimes) twist in the storyline in French cinema and the lack of alternative solution in British cinema. The consequence of this narrative style was that in British films characters were doomed by determinism and that their struggles to change their conditions turned out to be fruitless. By representing characters as samples of British society, one easily gets the impression that they were the victims of economic circumstances far beyond their reach. As a

result, the only way to improve their situations, it is suggested, would be through governmental measures which the Conservative Party proved reluctant to take. In that sense, British social cinema sometimes appeared paradoxically as slightly reactionary in their condemnation of the unemployed for accepting their situation. Although it is undeniable that finding a job in 1980s Britain was not an easy task, in particular for people belonging to the working class, directors tended to focus on characters whose fate was sealed. Instead of depicting characters nurturing the hope of finding a new job, these films insist on the passive attitude of the characters who are pictured either in a static position (the three men in *Meantime*, Kieran in *Business as Usual*) or roaming aimlessly around the city (*Looks and Smiles*, *Fords on Water*, *Vroom*). The paradox of this cinema was that filmmakers who were supposedly criticising the state of Britain under the Conservative government did it by offering a quiet negative depiction of the unemployed in such distress that they were unable to react and fight against governmental measures. By contrast, French cinema suggested that unemployment was the result of a failure of personality. In a modern parody of the heroic character, the main protagonist as the victim of unemployment deserves his or her situation because his or her personality does not enable him or her to fit within society (either for personal or professional reasons). An identical feature of the two cinemas however can be found in a gender division around unemployment and its consequences. It appears that both French and British men generally refuse to face the reality of their situations. Hence in *Fords on Water*, *Vroom*, *Business as Usual*, *La Comédie du travail*, *La Smala* and *Romuald et Juliette*, men escape from their social and familial responsibilities and sometimes leave home. By way of contrast, women are left with no option but to keep the family running. And in order to do so, they fight to the last to support their families. If the 1980s picture men lost without the security of a professional position, women reveal themselves as strong and resourceful characters (*Business as Usual*, *Blood Red Roses*, *Le Voyage à Paimpol*, *La Smala*,

Romuald et Juliette, Le Thé à la menthe) who do not give up in front of the economic adversity. The following chapter will consider whether a similar gender dynamic is found within the family circle.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The family

INTRODUCTION

The decision to study the 'celluloid family' in the 1980s was suggested, on the one hand by the important changes that the familial structure underwent in contemporary French and British society at the time, and on the other hand by the shortage of academic literature on the representation of the family in French and British films of the 1980s. A central institution of modern societies, the family was the focus of much political attention during that decade and its re-emergence on political agendas raised the question of which economic, political and social factors provoked such a trend. As seen in the previous chapter, the 1980s were characterized by a high level of unemployment in both societies. As a result of economic recession, the family became a more controversial issue since financial hardship was closely linked to the need for familial solidarity even if the family became increasingly associated with the idea of individualism and private matters. Yet, the shift started in the 1970s from the patriarchal family pattern to a more modern family continued on a larger scale in the 1980s. In this evolution, women played a major role and the spread of women's work evolved in parallel with familial changes, in particular in the more urbanized areas. As noted by French sociologist Jean-Hugues Déchaux (1998, 63), 'it's largely under women's impetus that divorce became more popular'. Indeed, the number of divorces rose dramatically in pre-1980s Britain (from 27,000 in 1960 to 159,000 in 1980) while in France the evolution was slower (from 30,000 in 1960 to 81,000 in 1980). Concurrently, the continuing rise of the number of single-parent families, which started in the 1960s, and the growing number of children brought up in step-families was more important in Britain than in France. Such evolutions away from the stereotype of the 'happy' nuclear family were an important concern for public institutions (Déchaux 1998, 60, Smart 1991, 157) and the media frequently referred to the crisis of the family unit in the 1980s. As such, single-parent families constituted the most striking

examples of what was frequently considered as 'abnormal' while re-constituted families through re-marriages were perceived as much more socially acceptable.

In this respect, the two governments adopted a rather different attitude in the way they perceived their role towards the family. The wish of the Conservative Party, which Margaret Thatcher already presented in 1977 as 'the party of the family' (Wicks 1991, 169), to encourage two-parent families was greatly motivated by the desire to move the family to the private sphere. For instance, in 1987 a Social Security Act abolished the universal maternity grant which then became a means-tested benefit. In this respect, the 1983 EEC draft directive about parental leave was rejected by the British government in 1986, leaving parents responsible for organising childcare and paid employment themselves. Economic recession also served as a justification for the Conservative Party to bring back married women with children to their 'rightful' place, that is to say at home. Similarly, the French government perceived the nuclear family as the 'norm'. But since French society evolved rapidly in the 1980s, the Socialist Party decided to intervene in family life by setting up measures in accordance with current social realities (while building an already more generous family allowances and nursery provision, set in place after the war as part of natalist state policies). Consequently, based on the idea of equality between men and women regarding their familial responsibilities, parental leaves as well as the opening of more state-funded nurseries were concrete measures in favour of a more flexible adaptation to family life. Legally, a huge step was taken with the Malhuret Act from 22nd July 1987, which introduced joint parental authority. A consequence of the growing rate of divorce (from 81,000 in 1980 to an average of 105,000 from the mid-1980s onwards (Déchaux 1998, 63)), this Act strongly encouraged the survival of the parental couple after the separation of the marital one by attributing to both parents the same legal functions towards their children, while previously in most cases child custody was given to the mother.

In films, the evolution of the family can also be traced through the representation of single parents, reconstituted families, divorce and children. The number of French films produced in the 1980s partly explains the greater number of films focusing on the family compared to British cinema. Nevertheless, French cinema retained a stronger interest in the representation of the family than British cinema. Family matters were thoroughly discussed in a large number of French films, so that here a sample of significant examples has been selected for study. The sample includes films dealing with the 'traditional' nuclear family such as *Le Destin de Juliette* (Aline Isserman, 1982), *Le Lieu du crime* (André Téchiné, 1985), *Conseil de famille* (Constantin Costa-Gavras, 1986), *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (Etienne Chatilliez, 1988), *La Boum* and *La Boum 2* (Claude Pinoteau, 1980 and 1982), *Le Voyage à Paimpol* (John Berry, 1985), *A nos amours* (Maurice Pialat, 1983) and *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* (Pascal Thomas, 1988). *Femmes de personne* (Christopher Frank, 1984), *L'Effrontée* (Claude Miller, 1985), *Kung Fu Master* (Agnès Varda, 1987), *Romuald et Juliette* and *Trois hommes et un couffin* (both Coline Serreau, 1989 and 1985) focus on the issue of single-parent families, while *Paroles et musique* (Elie Chouraqui, 1984), *La Vie de famille* (Jacques Doillon, 1984) and *Je vous aime* (Claude Berri, 1980) deal with parents' separation. By contrast, it was extremely rare to find the nuclear family as a central theme of 1980s British films and as such *Looks and Smiles* (1981) and *Meantime* (1983) were noticeable exceptions. The family was marginalized in British films, either as a sub-plot or as an additional *effet de réel* in the build-up of a character. The family was frequently considered a problem, either because it was seen to be dysfunctional (*Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (Alan Clarke, 1987), *Betrayal* (David Jones, 1982), *Mona Lisa* (Neil Jordan, 1986)), childless (*Educating Rita* (Lewis Gilbert, 1983), *High Hopes* (Mike Leigh, 1988)) or abandoned by the film's central protagonist (*Shirley Valentine* (Lewis Gilbert, 1989), *The Good Father* (Mike Newell,

1986), *She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjamas* (John Goldsmith, 1984), *Paris by Night* (David Hare, 1988), *A Fish called Wanda* (Charles Crichton, 1988)).

Despite the renewal of family structure both in society and on screen, film scholars and critics have largely overlooked the representation of the family in 1980s films and have focused instead on gender representation (Austin 1996, 46-80 and Powrie 1997 on French cinema and Brunsdon ed. 1986, King 1996, 216-31, Hill 1999a, 168-91 and Harper 2000, 139-52 on British cinema). The family has, however, been considered within the production of particular directors. Hence, Brigitte Rollet (1998) wrote on Coline Serreau, Ginette Vincendeau (1990, 257-68), Joël Magny (1992) and René Prédal (1999) on Maurice Pialat, Jill Forbes (1992, 200-30) on Jacques Doillon and Maurice Pialat, John Hill (1999a and 2000b, 249-60) on Ken Loach, Alan Clarke and Mike Leigh, Ray Carney and Leonard Quart (2000) on Mike Leigh). As I was writing this thesis, Carrie Tarr and Brigitte Rollet (2001, 111-32) and Françoise Audé (2002) wrote about the representation of the family in French women's cinema in the 1980s and 1990s.

While most scholars have focused on the evolution of gender in 1980s British and French films, this chapter deals with the representation of the family as well as a redefinition of the family unit in the 1980s. Indeed, whereas the study of the family unit in the 1980s is largely absent from scholarly work, it was discussed by film critics at the time. As far as British films are concerned, my aim is to demonstrate that whatever the point of view adopted (women, men, children), it seems that the family was not a good place to be in the 1980s (motif of escape, loneliness, lack of communication). Yet, no other model was offered apart from the traditional nuclear family. British cinema ironically corroborated the governmental idea that the nuclear family was the best solution through various examples of family structure where the fact that one element was 'missing' (either the father, the mother or children) was presented as a disruption causing the unhappiness of the other family members. As we will

see, 1980s British cinema showed the impossibility to reach such a perfect model. As with the issue of unemployment, British cinema provided a rather pessimistic portrayal of its society through the transformation of the family unit. By way of contrast, French cinema moved from the theory of women's emancipation in the 1970s (*Va voir maman, papa travaille* (François Leterrier, 1977), *Une Histoire simple* (Claude Sautet, 1978), *Pourquoi pas!* (Coline Serreau, 1977)) to the difficulty of women's everyday life. In fact, the notion developed by 1980s French films was that the nuclear family was clearly the best model when it worked. Yet, various models were presented, experienced or denounced when it did not work and alternatives were adopted and a solution could always be found. For women, the experimentation of a situation taken for granted (work for women, equality within the couple) was met with the idea of sacrificing either work, children or partner. French films associated the representation of men looking after a baby with a new trend in society. As for French and British teenagers, films depicted them as characters who needed models and reassurance within the family cocoon, which they often found in French cinema, but more rarely so in British cinema which focused on loneliness. Examples will be taken from both *auteur* and mainstream cinema, in genres as diverse as comedy, social realism, the thriller and *cinéma vérité* in order to understand what the family meant in British and French films of the 1980s. A comparison of nuclear families will be followed by the position of the mother within the family since women's new attitude towards family led to men repositioning themselves within the family while children adapted themselves to the parental decisions.

I - THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

Unlike French cinema of the 1980s, British cinema avoided tackling the subject of the contemporary nuclear family and only a handful of 1980s films — which will be studied in this section — referred to this theme. Yet, at the same time a number of successful British

films made in the 1980s dealt with the nuclear family in stories set in the 1950s such as *A Private Function* (Malcom Mowbray, 1985), *Hope and Glory* (John Boorman, 1987), *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987) and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (Terence Davies, 1988)⁵⁷. These films provided both a nostalgic and comic depiction of family life in a decade when strong family networks still existed.

Among British films set in the 1980s, the nuclear family was rarely found as a central theme and in this respect, a film like *Meantime* (1983) stood apart among the overall production. The sense of estrangement found within the traditional family life on the screen is underlined by two striking scenes from *Made in Britain* (Alan Clarke, 1983) and *The Ploughman's Lunch* (Richard Eyre, 1983) in which both suggest happiness through family life is unreachable in contemporary Britain. *Made in Britain* follows the life of young delinquent Trevor (Tim Roth) who has been placed in a rehabilitation centre after being taken away from home. During his nocturnal city-centre wanderings, Trevor's attention is suddenly caught by a shop window. A completely silent soundtrack emphasises Trevor's confusion as he stares at a display of a model family watching television together. In a *mise en abîme* of the film's overall concerns, this scene shows Trevor's incapacity to perceive the four members together through a succession of separate shots of each model. The oversized labels on the models highlight the fakeness of the scene while turning the nuclear family into an ungraspable luxury. This scene questions the possible link between Trevor having experienced an unsatisfactory family life in the past and his current inability to adapt to social rules. Similarly, in *The Ploughman's Lunch*, James (the main protagonist) observes the shooting of a scene representing the domestic bliss of nuclear family life. Set in the 1950s, the scene insists on the happiness of the moment enhanced by an entertaining soundtrack while the family routine highlights gender specific functions (the mother serving tea, the father reading his newspaper). As in *Made in Britain*, the warmth of family life is presented as an extra-diegetic

element which belongs to the virtual world of advertisement. In sharp contrast to this scene of make-believe is the conversation which follows between James and the advert director who bluntly admits the complete failure of his marriage. Both films play on the contrasting effect between the flawless image of family life promoted by advertisement in the 1980s and the abrupt reality experienced by the protagonists. These two films reveal that, in 1980s Britain, the image of the happy family was still extremely positive in terms of national identification. Yet, through Trevor and James's perception it appears that such identification is more and more remote from their personal experience.

In quantitative terms, French cinema also revealed a lack of enthusiasm for depicting the nuclear family in contemporary France. However, its representation was found both in *auteur* films such as *Le Destin de Juliette* (Aline Isserman, 1982), *Le Lieu du crime* (André Téchiné, 1985), *Conseil de famille* (Constantin Costa-Gavras, 1986) and in popular comedies such as *Attention une femme peut en cacher une autre* (Georges Lautner, 1983), *Les Parents ne sont pas simples cette année* (Marcel Jullian, 1983), *Vous habitez chez vos parents?* (Michel Fermaud, 1983) and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (Etienne Chatiliez, 1988). *Le Destin de Juliette* condemns the oppression of the traditional nuclear family in rural France through the experience of Juliette (Laure Duthilleul). Knowing that she would lose the custody of her daughter if she decides to leave home, Juliette puts up with the everyday ordeal of living with an alcoholic husband (Richard Bohringer). Another *auteur* film on the nuclear family favourably received by the press, *Le Lieu du crime* deals with the difficulty for Lili (Catherine Deneuve) to conform to the example of nuclear family set upon her by her domineering mother (Danielle Darrieux). *Conseil de famille* was seen by the press at the time of release as depicting 'a typical French family' (Magny 1986, 53 and Leclère 1986a). Hiding their illegal activities behind the routine of family life where the father (Johnny Hallyday) goes to 'work' (he is a professional housebreaker) and the mother (Fanny Ardant) is a housewife bringing up

the two children, this family breaks apart when the son denounces his own father. Underneath the appearance of an old-fashioned patriarchal structure, *Conseil de famille* expresses the cynicism of family relationships based on lies. By contrast with these *auteur* films which tackle the subject of the nuclear family in a dramatic mode, mainstream comedies are built around the pleasure of family life. For instance, in *Attention une femme peut en cacher une autre*, Alice (Miou-Miou) lives between Paris and Trouville for professional matters and shares her life between two households where she is in both cases a fulfilled wife and mother. This utopian and refined comedy demonstrates that the nuclear family works so well as a recipe for happiness, that having it twice is even better.

1 - Case study: *Meantime* and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*

As with the previous chapter, *Meantime* and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* will be taken as case study in order to analyse the similarities and discrepancies between the two nuclear families. *Meantime* tells the everyday life of the Pollock family, Mavis (Pam Ferris) and Frank (Jeff Robert) and their two sons Mark (Phil Daniels) and Colin (Tim Roth). Also present to a lesser extent is Mavis's sister Barbara (Marion Bailey) and her husband John (Alfred Molina), both financially secure and introduced as a childless couple. In *La Vie*, the revelation of baby swapping twelve years earlier by the embittered local nurse results in the Groseille family 'selling' their son Maurice (Benoît Magimel) to his biological family. In both *Meantime* and *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* the family is central to the narration, in which habitat, familial ritual and the relationship between the different members of the family contribute to the construction of the on-screen family. For this virtual family to exist, a series of necessary components are frequently introduced and the most obvious characteristic usually concerns the appearance of the different members. Since the audience is required to believe that the on-screen family is a 'real' family, particular efforts are often made in order to

create a visual resemblance. However, in the two films under study this characteristic is much more noticeable in the French film than in the British one. In *Meantime*, there is no genuine attention given to a possible resemblance between the parents and their two sons and as Mike Leigh (Ruchti 1989, 21) explains, 'I gave the three men a pair of glasses and I had a family'. As for clothes, the four members of this family share a nondescript appearance and it is therefore significant that when Colin rebels against his family, his way of distinguishing himself from the others is by shaving his head. In *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*, playing on the physical appearance of the two families is important to the narrative as the film is partly built on the inherent and learned features of the swapped children Maurice and Bernadette. Thus, Maurice's resemblance to his biological father is made obvious by a common involuntary shoulder movement. While in the Groseille family, the most striking feature is the excessive weight of the three female members (the name Groseille translates as Redcurrant but most of all the first syllable 'gros' means fat) which is also — in a less extreme fashion — visible in Bernadette's 'puppy fat' despite the healthy diet of the Le Quesnoys⁵⁸. Physical resemblance is enhanced by a similar dress code in the two families: tartan and plain colours, usually dark blue and green, which are associated with traditional Catholic families for the Le Quesnoys, and garish clothes and make up for the underclass Groseille mother and her daughters. The polarisation of characters and locations is strong with the Groseilles' world pitted against the Le Quesnoys' with the restrained and cold colours of both their clothes and their housing decorations. As such, Pierre Bourdieu's (1979, 84) explanation that the 'habitus' of the traditional middle-class is characterized by a controlled consumption revealing wisely spent money without ostentatious display of richness perfectly fit the Le Quesnoy family. In the same way, the interior of the Pollock family looks as miserable and dull as the clothes they are wearing and it looks as if their choices are only motivated by economic distress. However, despite this chameleon resemblance between the family and its habitat, there is a

discrepancy in the way the characters interact with their dwellings. In *La Vie* habitat connotes the idea of a warm and protective cocoon which fits the need of the family even if the Groseille family is only shot in its living room whereas the Le Quesnoy family's house is extensively filmed from the garage to the bedrooms. This is partly due to the fact that for the Le Quesnoy each room corresponds to a particular activity (the kitchen where the mother talks to the maid, the bedrooms for the children's homework and private tuition, the garage to get the boat ready for the summer, the living-room when guests turn up) while everything is done in the living-room for the Groseilles. The difference between the housing estate flat of the Groseilles and the Pollocks is both the decor and the way the characters experience space. Despite its exiguity, the Groseilles' flat is presented as spacious with shots from the entrance door in order to highlight the expanse of the dining room and exterior shots from the balcony with a bird's eye view on the surrounding estates. By contrast the Pollocks are crammed in their flat with the two sons sharing their bedroom and the narrow corridor whose impracticality highlights the impression of a confined place. The use of space implies that the Groseilles live together by choice while the Pollocks both physically and verbally express the financial constraint behind their cohabitation.

The sense of belonging to a family is also translated by common rituals and as such the representation of the meals is extremely telling. The meal has been extensively studied by Bourdieu (1979, 85) for its social value as a practice learnt inside the family at a very early age. In *La Vie* the meal symbolises the link between the members of the family. Forcing the narration to a halt, a change from action to more personal relationships corroborates the idea that 'meals are a place allowing the circulation and sharing of food as well as verbal exchange' (Moine 1994, 8). The table is the place chosen by the family members to express themselves and it is therefore significant that a pan shot of every character around the table accompanies the discovery of Maurice's real identity and that Bernadette expresses her awareness of her

biological family by spilling her soup on the table. The rigid structure of the Le Quesnoy family is made clear through their rituals of food consumption (the mother's announcement that 'Monday is ravioli day' became a popular catchphrase when the film was released). Similarly, when the Le Quesnoy mother leaves the house, the familial chaos that ensues is translated by the loss of rituals, as in the making of pancakes outside of Candlemas day. By contrast, the four members of the Pollock family in *Meantime* are never seen together around a table and, in fact, the meal is replaced by watching television. The difference between dining table and sofa graphically illustrates the symbolic difference between French and British on-screen families in most films of the 1980s, as the table gathers family members towards each other, fostering eye-contact. By contrast, watching television is seen as an opportunity for the family to talk while avoiding the potential embarrassment of eye contact and enabling the mother to carry on with her domestic chores. Colin and Mark echo their parents' inability to communicate and imitate their constant squabbling.

In terms of the way the family articulates itself in these two films, the main role is given to the mother who occupies a privileged position in her relationship to the other members. Although Susan Hayward (1993a, 248) writes of 1980s French cinema that 'the family and the extended family is back and with it the patriarch', the following section shows that in *Meantime* and *La Vie*, women occupy a central position thanks to their matriarchal authority. Reviewing *La Vie*, Françoise Audé (1988, 76) notes that 'at the centre of each family, the same organising as well as comforting motherly presence' persists throughout, while Ray Carney and Leonard Quart (2000, 164) write that *Meantime's* 'general subject is the relationship of two families headed by sisters'. A similar dominant position within the family in both *Meantime* and *La Vie* does not, however, imply that either Mavis, Madame Le Quesnoy or Madame Groseille perform the same function. In *La Vie*, the two mothers have developed a strong verbal as well as physical communication with the rest of the family and as long as they maintain this physical

presence they seem to be in control of the situation. Even if the Groseille mother is meant to be perceived by the audience as physically grotesque, she nevertheless attracts her children like a magnet: Roselyne, the oldest daughter, is in charge of her mother's physical appearance while Franck, the oldest son, immediately ends up in his mother's protective arms on his release from prison. Although the apparent laziness of Madame Groseille may be interpreted as selfishness, it is counterbalanced by her reassuring physicality as her obesity contributes to establish her as a loving mother. By contrast, Madame Le Quesnoy more obviously embodies the 'correct' dedicated mother whose presence is necessary for the well-being of her ordered family. Her inability to cope with the ensuing chaotic family life which eventually develops as a result of the arrival of Maurice and her decision to leave the household proves fatal to the familial organisation. By contrast, Mavis rules her family through an authoritative presence but her cold personality is doubled by a visible resentment towards her younger son Colin. Conversely, the father is negatively depicted in the Pollock and Groseille families and his abandonment of his role as the head of the family is economic (unemployed), physical (he spends his time in an armchair) and personal (no psychological support). Indeed, M. Le Quesnoy too fails in his attempt to replace his wife after her departure and his authority is denied by his children's attitude.

What participates to the construction of the on-screen family in these two films is a common appearance, ritual gatherings and the central role of the mother. The role of the meal as a moment of exchange was typical of the familial routine in French films whereas in British films the lack of communication was replaced by a television set. As for the mother, despite her central role in the two films, the attention was drawn to her protective presence in *La Vie* whereas in *Meantime* the cold personality of the mother echoes a general feeling of desolation and loneliness.

II - WOMEN AND FAMILY

In terms of public policy, British and French governments in the 1980s adopted extremely different attitudes towards women, children and work. According to sociologist Linda Hantrais (1992, 999), during this decade 55% of women worked in France while in Britain there was a continuous increase from 58% in 1980 to 64% in 1989. However, among women with at least one child under ten, 56% of French women worked (including 16% part-time) versus 46% of British women (including 32% part-time). Such figures could be understood as a greater dedication to children among British women, but, as Hantrais (1992, 1000) underlines, it was not a question of choice but an economic necessity. This discrepancy was largely explained by state policy. For instance, maternity leaves only benefited half of British women whereas the French system was one of the most generous in Europe. Similarly, child benefit was introduced in Britain in 1987 and was only attributed to deprived families whereas in 1980s France child benefit was allocated to everyone. For pension benefit, the bringing up of a child was the equivalent of two years of work for French women but was not taken into account in Britain. As for childcare facilities, public institutions provided for 20% of French children versus 2% of British children under 3 and 95% of French children versus 35% of British children aged between 3 and 5. It is therefore significant that, in Britain, initiatives such as more flexibility towards maternity leaves and the provision of childcare at work came from the employers who needed to keep their fully-trained female employees. The natalist policy set up by the French government meant that children did not prevent the continuity of most women's professional careers, unlike in Britain where individual strategies were expected within the couple.

In films, the nuclear family was no longer the dominant model in that decade. New variations included the single-parent family, the childless couple, the reconstituted family. However, the way women positioned themselves within the family was an important thematic issue of the

1980s and since women were often the cause of change in the family structure (whether intentionally or not), their representation will be studied first. Both French and British films of the 1980s explored the difficulties for women to combine their roles as wife, mother and worker. The problematic question of 'not having it all', as a film issue, was not specific to this decade. However, it seems to have surfaced with special force at the time. As far as British cinema is concerned, scholars have focused on one aspect of female representation, namely the improvement of women's condition. Hence, in his study of working-class women John Hill (1999a, 174) concludes that 'endings are characteristically more optimistic, and tend to avoid giving full rein to the pathos that is typical of their precursors'. Similarly, Justine King (1996, 231) considers that 'the female protagonist of the contemporary British woman's film does not have to pay the final price of her transgressions'. Adopting a divergent point of view through a larger sample of films, Sue Harper writes that 'overall, images of women in 1980s British cinema were extremely mixed' (2000, 151), yet 'most 1980s cinema interpreted female identity as threatening and lubricious' (2000, 148). Although I do agree that most women-centered narratives project a portrayal of strong and independent British women, especially among working-class women, there is a need to develop the argument further by pointing out that any portrayal of women's success comes at a cost, and it is a cost that is too often measured in biological terms. An important aspect largely ignored by scholars is that no matter how independent and strong British women are, in the end they are judged in accordance to their biological function. As such, Mary Desjardin's (1993, 130-44) project to study women in 1980s British cinema in relation to their maternal status is quite unusual, although it is confined to the representation of women during the second World War in 1980s cinema. As for French cinema, the 1970s debate concerning the positioning of women within the family unit as well as society was replaced by a critical analysis of films made by women. Most film critics tend to include a section on French women filmmakers (Forbes 1992, 91-4,

Hayward 1993a, 258-60, Siclier 1993, 189-205, Austin 1996, 81-91, Prédal 1996, 616-27) and a more thorough analysis of films made by women in the 1980s is provided by Carrie Tarr and Brigitte Rollet (2001), as well as Françoise Audé (2002). Yet, little has been written on the representation of the contemporary woman in relation to family life, either in mainstream or *auteur* films. This section will thus analyse the characteristics of the modern French woman on screen. An overview of significant British and French films focusing on women will be followed by the case study of *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* (Pascal Thomas, 1988) and *High Hopes* (Mike Leigh, 1988).

1 - The 1980s woman

French and British films of the 1980s both revealed the struggle for women to combine their functions as wife, mother and worker, yet at the same time stated that the most valuable role was the ability to be a mother. Even if this view seemed out of date by the 1980s, such a set idea was recurrent in films, no matter the genre (social realism, political thriller or comedy). Frequently set in a middle-class environment, French cinema drew a portrait of women trying to gather these three components (couple, children and work) in their life whereas British cinema depicted women belonging to the two ends of the social spectrum who were required to make more concessions in life. In Britain, the 1980s saw a core of films staging contemporary women as the central characters, whose genre ranged from the political thriller (*Paris by Night* (David Hare, 1988)), social comedies (*Educating Rita* (Lewis Gilbert, 1983), *She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjamas* (John Goldsmith, 1984), *A Letter to Brezhnev* (Chris Bernard, 1985), *Personal Services* (Terry Jones, 1987), *Shirley Valentine* (Lewis Gilbert, 1989)) and social-realist films (*Doll's Eye* (Jan Worth, 1982), *Steaming* (Joseph Losey, 1984), *Strapless* (David Hare, 1988)). None of these films took the family as its central subject but they nevertheless included the positioning of women towards the family in their narratives or

expressed on screen the consequences of the failure of family life. A significant feature of French cinema in the 1980s was the presence of strong professional women battling on the family front in order to combine work, husband and children. The typical portrayal of the independent middle-class mother bringing up children was performed, for instance, by Marthe Keller in *Femmes de personne* (Christopher Frank, 1983) and Catherine Deneuve in *Je vous aime* (Claude Berri, 1980), *Le Bon plaisir* (Francis Girod, 1983) and *Paroles et musique* (Elie Chouraqui, 1984). The similarities of these female archetypes were acknowledged by the press which coined the expression 'modern French women'. But which type of female character was identified behind this epithet?

Je vous aime (Claude Berri, 1980) opens the decade with the portrayal of Alice (Catherine Deneuve), a glamorous and successful woman caught in a succession of short-lived relationships (with men embodied by an all-star cast: Jean-Louis Trintignant, Alain Souchon, Gérard Depardieu and Serge Gainsbourg). Through a series of flashbacks, *Je vous aime* evokes Alice's life as a songwriter and a mother and her inability to be fully convinced of the benefits of family life. Often perceived as a story of frustration, the film was seen by critics as a representation of the modern women since 'Alice's character is utterly contemporary' (Rochu 1980) and that there is 'no need to say that Berri has exploited a popular track: talking about these new women' (De Montvalon 1980). Similarly in *Paroles et musique*, Margaux (Deneuve) incarnates 'a portrait of the modern woman' (Parra 1984b, 79). Françoise (Brigitte Fossey) and François (Claude Brasseur) in *La Boum* and *La Boum 2* (Claude Pinoteau, 1980 and 1982) form a 'modern couple' battling over their professional lives (Leclère 1982) while the character of Cécile (Marthe Keller) depicted in *Femmes de personne* (Christopher Frank, 1983) is seen also as a 'modern woman' (Siclier 1984).

What these women have in common is a successful professional career: Alice in *Je vous aime* is a songwriter, Margaux in *Paroles et musique* is a concert manager, Françoise in *La Boum*

and *La Boum 2* is a cartoonist and Cécile in *Femmes de personne* is a radiologist. Work is vital to their psychological and economic independence.



Paroles et musique: Margaux (Catherine Deneuve) rushing the children to school...on a Wednesday morning (a traditional day off for French schoolchildren).

Furthermore, all these characters have to combine their careers with the upbringing of children and a problematic relationship with their husband or partner. Beside their common personal and professional situations, a similar *mise en scène* is used to present these women. With the glamorous appearance of good-looking middle-aged bourgeois women, Deneuve, Fossey and Keller project both power and sensuality. And their images of middle-class women are corroborated by their homes: spacious flats in central Paris (except for Alice who prefers the countryside) whose luxury is increased by camera work (long indoor shots or, for instance, the tracking shot following Cécile's son during the opening scene of *Femmes de personne*). Furthermore, the use of cross-cutting editing puts the emphasis on the quick pace of their everyday life in parallel with other members of their family and work. Although increasingly associated with outdoor space and the public sphere, once in the domestic sphere these women have a set role to perform which is presented as the most valuable one in terms of social achievement. Being a good mother equals having developed a trustworthy

relationship with the family based on communication. Thus, bedtime represents an important moment for the working single mother as one of the few opportunities in their timetable to establish a genuine complicity with her children. In *Paroles et musique*, domestic life revolves around the two bedrooms: Margaux's bedroom relates to her desertion by her husband and temporary conquest by a new lover and her children's bedroom is where she performs her motherly role. For Margaux family life fully expresses itself in Charlotte and Elliot's bedroom where she is seen as an understanding and loving mother. Therefore it is significant that before accepting Jeremy (Christophe Lambert) as her lover she introduces herself as a mother (she opens her children's bedroom). The exiguity of the children's bedroom contrasts with the rest of the flat but instead of revealing financial hardship (as in *Meantime*) it evokes a womb-like protective space. The mother's loving presence in her children's bedroom as a redemption for her daytime absence almost became a cliché of the films about the active 1980s French women: Brigitte Fossey in *La Boum* and *La Boum 2* (1980 and 1982), Marthe Keller in *Femmes de personne* (1983), Nathalie Baye in *Rive droite, rive gauche* (Philippe Labro, 1984). As for Firmine Richard, the black cleaner working at night in *Romuald et Juliette* (1989), the reversal of stereotype also works, as Juliette's loving presence during the day compensates for her bedtime absence.

By contrast, 1980s British cinema presented a wider spectrum of women in relation to the family by including portraits of middle-class mothers (Bernice Stegers in *Doll's Eye* (1982), Vanessa Redgrave and Sarah Miles in *Steaming* (1984) and Charlotte Rampling in *Paris by Night* (1988)) as well as working-class mothers and wives (Julie Walters in *Educating Rita* (1983), Patti Love in *Steaming* (1984), Glenda Jackson in *Business as Usual* (1987) Pauline Collins in *Shirley Valentine* (1989)). Like the middle-class French women, their English counterparts are also presented as glamorous, powerful and living a fast-paced life. Working-class characters are praised for their determination to fight against the domestic role which

they are expected to perform. What constitutes an important discrepancy between the French and British films is that in the latter women are rarely represented as good mothers. As previously stated, although the family is rarely a central theme in 1980s British cinema, its malfunctioning nature is an important component of films such as *Educating Rita* (1983), *She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjamas* (1984), *Steaming* (1984) and *Shirley Valentine* (1989). The novelty of these films is in their presentation of women from different backgrounds and age groups either reflecting on their own family life or refusing to conform to the traditional image of family life. Like French bourgeois women, their British counterparts are aloof and glamorous (Charlotte Rampling in *Paris by Night*, Vanessa Redgrave and Sarah Miles in *Steaming*), while working-class women intermingle an 'ordinary' appearance with an extraordinary personality (Julie Walters in *Educating Rita*, *Personal Services* and *She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjamas*, Patti Love in *Steaming*, Pauline Collins in *Shirley Valentine*). Family life is presented as constraining as well as representing a loss of identity from which the women decide to extract themselves. 'The motif of escape' noted by Justine King (1996, 216-31) is also a recurrent theme in the films quoted above and this escape can be seen as a common decision to flee family life. Despite the fact that these women are introduced as 'transgressive women' (King 1996, 219), the denouement always refers to their unhappiness because of their inability to have a traditional family life. In *Educating Rita* (1983), Rita (Julie Walters) plays a married working-class woman in her mid-twenties who refuses to have a traditional nuclear family at this stage of her life and prefers to go to university. After presenting Rita's performance at university as exceptionally good, the film nevertheless ends on a more misogynist note. The final static shot of the film showing Rita walking through the empty corridor at the airport insists on the loneliness of the young woman with the depth-of-field underlining growing emptiness in the foreground. Although Rita's graduation with distinction suggests her ability to move forward on her own, the emphasis is not made on her

exceptional results but on her celibacy which, the film suggests, does not make her a fully accomplished woman. From miniskirt, dyed hair and loud manner of speech to grey coat, dark hair and a more controlled gait, Rita has changed from being over visible to being transparent. This transparency is the price to pay for her emancipation to be possible since Rita has lost both her working-class manner of speech and her highly sexualized image. Therefore, her emancipation is associated with a loss of her identity.



Educating Rita: Rita (Julie Walters) alone at the airport after saying goodbye to Frank (Michael Caine) on his way to Australia.

Under the pretence of representing women as determined and free to make their own decisions, both the plot, the themes and the *mise en scène* somehow contradict this possibility at the end by offering an ambiguous portrayal of Rita, emphasizing her status as single and childless woman. British social comedies of the 1980s produced a very ambiguous type of female characters that can be categorized as transitional, in so far as their liberated attitude in the outside world cannot be transferred into family life. Together with the representation of childless women as failures, 1980s British cinema was keen on pretending to give women the possibility of becoming the agent of their own lives while maintaining family life as the only recipe for their personal happiness.

Writing about nation and representation, Susan Hayward (2000, 112) considers that 'the only time that a woman's body 'matters' (counts as matter) is when she is the reproducer of life (as mother), then we can perceive why nations valorize the female body in distinct discourses that represent her as reproducer of the nation'. In 1980s French and British cinemas, it was precisely this notion which was illustrated through the representation of women because, no matter how successful their professional lives were, how glamorous and sensual they were, they were ultimately judged by their ability to procreate or their capacity to be good mothers. This judgement was generally made by male directors (Claude Berri, Elie Chouraqui, Christopher Frank, Francis Girod, Claude Pinoteau, André Téchiné on the French side and Chris Bernard, Lewis Gilbert, John Goldsmith, Terry Jones and Joseph Losey on the British side) who, under cover of presenting a positive portrayal of independent and liberated women, demonstrated the primacy of their biological function as the necessary ingredient for their personal fulfilment. This point is fully expressed in a key scene at the end of *Steaming* (Joseph Losey, 1984) in a long static shot of Nancy (Vanessa Redgrave), Sarah (Sarah Miles) and Josie (Patti Love) talking together by the edge of the pool in a London Turkish bath. Sitting in the middle, Sarah is the focal point on the screen, a privileged position which reflects the admiration of Nancy and Josie for her financial independence and her professional situation as a lawyer. Medium shots then alternate between Nancy and Josie as they explain their own limitations. Embarrassed by her body, Nancy is a middle-aged mother who has been recently abandoned by her husband. Josie left school at fifteen, was pregnant at sixteen and, as the opening scene testifies, is regularly beaten up by her partner. Suddenly the camera tracks forward on to Sarah's face as she bursts into tears. The conclusion to this conversation therefore draws attention to Sarah admitting that her childlessness makes her a complete failure as she collapses into Nancy's motherly arms. Besides, the fact that *Steaming* is entirely shot within the old baths gives an atemporal flavour to these women's stories — like history

repeating itself. The *mise en scène* suggests, through close shots of the tiles, the marble and the stain-glass windows, that this perennial setting has been witness to many similar scenes of women discussing the importance of motherhood as the ultimate achievement.

In *Le Lieu du crime*, the issue is not to be a mother but to be a good one. A member of the local bourgeoisie in a small village, Lili (Catherine Deneuve) finally rebels against her mother's expectation that she gives her marriage and family life a new start: one night she decides to give in to her passion for a young runaway (Wadeck Stanczak). Contrasting sharply with the sunny and quiet countryside scenes of the film so far, this scene, shot at night under torrential rain possesses a melodramatic tone. The scene which shows Lili and the young man making love is shown through the point of view of her son Thomas (Nicolas Giraudi) who discovers them. The expression of surprise and disappointment on Thomas's face is briefly glimpsed through a door left ajar. It is this silent condemnation, rather than the outlaw status of the young man which seems to justify the very last shot of the film when the camera follows Lili's face behind the grid of the police van. What is interesting in this film is the way Catherine Deneuve's traditional image in the 1980s is subverted. She remains a glamorous mother as well as a professional woman, yet decides to break up the conventions of family life to liberate herself. Although the final shot overtly condemns Lili for her amoral behaviour, her son's trauma is the real condemnation, as if her punishment was the consequence of her being a bad mother. In the context of 1980s French and British cinemas, *Steaming* and *Le Lieu du crime* reflect a wider tendency of the two national cinemas — British films present childless women as failures and French films only give a second chance of fulfilment within the family to good mothers. Thus, while many childless women were negatively portrayed in British films (*Educating Rita*, *High Hopes*, *Meantime*, *She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjamas*, *Steaming*), most French women — if pictured as good mothers — were given the possibility to recreate a nuclear family. Hence, Margaux in *Paroles et musique* takes up again with her

husband and children, Juliette in *Romuald et Juliette* recreates a new family with Romuald, while Alice in *Je vous aime* moves from one nuclear family to another.

2 - Case study: *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* and *High Hopes*

Two films of 1988 *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* (Pascal Thomas) and *High Hopes* (Mike Leigh) provide a good illustration of the depiction of middle-aged women in Paris and London, presented in a series of vignettes. Thomas's film is set within the relatively affluent 'gauche caviar'⁵⁹, while Leigh's deals with working-class people and the *nouveaux riches*. *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* depicts the life of men and children sharing a holiday house on the île de Ré during the summer while the women are enjoying a brief interval of freedom in Paris (in a reversal of the traditional French situation in the summer, where women and children go to the seaside and men stay behind, the topic of many comedies). The opening scene at the station functions as a warning of the temporary change of routine and role reversal within the family unit. Although over thirty characters are included in the film, three types of families are presented in detail: the nuclear family (Dora, Martin and their children), the single-parent family (Odette and her two teenage daughters) and the childless couple (Marie-Françoise and Tocanier). In *High Hopes* the character of Mrs Bender (Edna Doré), an old widow living in a council house, is the link which introduces the other families: the couple who decides to have a child (Shirley and Cyril) and the two childless couples (Valerie and Martin as well as Laetitia and Rupert). In both films comedy scenes alternate with more intimate moments and thus mood swings flow along the narrative.

A common critique of both films was the lack of in-depth analysis of the characters: 'a considerable number of actors are reduced to sardonic and predictable puppets' (Frodon 1989b, on *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants*) while Clech (1989, 57) wrote of *High Hopes* that it 'forgets to show the characters alive and let them surrender themselves comfortably in

their respective archetypes'. The following discussion shows that, on the contrary, these two films, made by directors with a solid reputation for films centred around the representation of family life⁶⁰, provide a valuable insight into the transformation of women's role within the family. By sketching several families, these two films reveal various familial models and explore the notion of the 'ideal family' on screen. Using the example of a couple with children or child-to-be, these two films praise the trilogy of work, coupledness and children as the recipe for happiness.

By contrast to other female characters, Shirley (Ruth Sheen) in *High Hopes* and Dora (Susan Moncur) in *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* are given credit for their roles as wives and mothers (or mother-to-be). Shirley works as a municipal gardener and is in a long term relationship with her partner Cyril with whom she wants to have a child while Dora is a good-looking down-to-earth wife with two teenage children and a professional career. What differentiates Dora and Shirley from other female portraits is their sensuality as well as caring personalities. In *High Hopes*, Shirley is the one who re-establishes physical communication by moving towards others, for instance when she hugs Mrs Bender or when she tucks up Wayne (Jason Watkins) in bed. As for Dora, both her daughter and her sister-in-law Odette find solace in her arms. Shirley's job as a gardener symbolises her desire to become fertile herself and the silence when the baby question is evoked highlights the tension between Shirley and her partner concerning this decision. Time stops and a close shot of Shirley's face moves the narrative from action to introspection, which strongly contrasts with Valerie and Laetitia's continuous agitation. By combining the qualities of the mothering female, the good lover and the independent worker, Shirley and Dora represent the image of the ideal modern woman in the sense that they are 'having it all', while the other women (Odette, Valerie and Laetitia) are shown as 'incomplete' and struggling to achieve such happiness.

To illustrate this point, we can look at the case of Odette in *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* and Laetitia in *High Hopes*. Odette (Hélène Vincent), a medical doctor in her forties with two teenage daughters, has been abandoned by her husband and Laetitia (Lesley Manville), in her mid-thirties, works, is married but does not have children. Although Odette frankly displays her unhappiness, Laetitia keeps up appearances and her malaise is mostly seen in the privacy of her bedroom. The opening scene presents Odette as the deserted woman whose refuge in a phone box to cry her eyes out turns her distress into a farce. The vitality and pragmatism of her daughters (performed by Alexandra London and Leslie Azzoulai) also contribute to the light treatment of Odette's predicament. Overplaying her part, Odette's character works on the contrast between her identity (a doctor as well as a respectable middle-class mother in charge of two daughters) and her outrageous physical and verbal behaviour (she comments: 'When I sit down naked, I have a roll of flesh on my stomach which lays on my thighs — that's the only human contact that I get'). In *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants*, the comedy element is provided in the contrast between the situation and its over the top treatment as Odette's desire to find a partner becomes obsessive. By way of contrast, in *High Hopes* Laetitia does not express verbally her desire to have a child but her suffering is perceived through the stiffness of her attitude, her controlled manner of speech and her lack of kindness. Laetitia becomes a source of bitter mockery during the sex scenes where 'babytalk is an aphrodisiac' (Pym 1989a, 10), underlying the need to replace the absence of a child within her relationship with a childish attitude associated to her sexual ritual (with the introduction of a fictional 'character' called M. Sausage). Living in a world where problems are denied, '[Laetitia's and her husband Rupert's] voices have a formulaic weariness, as if they were not even listening but only going through the motions of pretending to converse' (Carney and Quart 2000, 190). The absence of a child can be understood as the impossibility for Laetitia and Rupert to establish genuine physical and verbal communication. By contrast, the supposedly depressive Odette proves to

be a passionate lover whose temporarily deserted affection can be easily regained. The hilarious sex scene with her dentist hidden in the closet reveals Odette as a potential partner, thus evoking the possibility for Odette and her daughters to move from a single-parent family to a reconstituted nuclear family. In Laetitia and Rupert's case, there is not much hope for the couple to form a nuclear family due to Laetitia's inability to express her feelings. The sex scenes turn into a preposterous attempt to reveal her sensual side, thus confirming her as a failed woman because of her impossibility to procreate. Both women are presented with a lack which leads to uncontrolled behaviour. However, the need for a partner creates comic situations in Odette's case, while the need for a child leads to pathetic scenes in Laetitia's. Odette's situation is presented as temporary and less dramatic whereas Laetitia's (possible) frigidity is presented as lasting and hopeless.

Valerie (Heather Tobias) and Martin (Philip Jackson) in *High Hopes* and Marie-Françoise (Catherine Jacob) and Tocanier (Michel Robin) in *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* represent two versions of the childless couple. The two strongly-built women in their late thirties share a compulsive need for being the centre of attention: they speak loudly, they take possession of the space by their continuous movements; moreover, their predilection for red and gold (clothes, earrings, lipstick, car in Valerie's case) reflects their passionate temper as well as their attraction to money. Valerie's marriage seems to have been motivated by a combined attraction for her husband and the entrepreneurial culture which he embodies, thus affirming her superiority to her family through mannerism and excessive consumerism. As for Marie-Françoise, in accordance with the values preached by the Mitterrand's left, her thirst for 'real culture' is personified by Tocanier's position as the owner of a publishing house. Marie-Françoise's stilted attitude (increased, during her first appearance on screen, by her surgical collar) and ungrounded jealousy contributes to the comical aspect of her character. Marie-Françoise's extravagant misery contrasts with Valerie's collapse during her mother's

seventieth birthday party (a scene which echoes Barbara's drunken state in *Meantime*) where she finally takes off her mask and admits her inner misery to her family. The notion of hysteria has often been applied by critics and scholars to Valerie's character: 'a hysterical and frustrated woman' (Godard 1989); 'Valerie, whose mounting hysteria culminates in a disastrous birthday party' (Maude 1989, 28); 'the film [...] 'punishes' her [...] by reducing her to a state of hysterical collapse' (Hill 1999a, 194). During this twist in the narrative, Valerie's character shifts from being despicable to inspiring pity. Bearing in mind that the word hysteria originates from uterus and therefore refers to a specifically feminine condition, Valerie's collapse is not seen as the result of her character but as a consequence of her being a woman. Thus this fit of hysteria represents Valerie's only opportunity to express her femininity and the close shots which insist on her distorted face while she slowly slides onto the floor highlight her defeat. Although the two women at first appear as reasonably similar, the development of their characters shows a darker treatment in *High Hopes*. Valerie and Marie-Françoise need their husbands' love to become fully fledged women but in Valerie's case her completeness equally involves becoming a mother (hence the presence of her dog, which can be interpreted as an ersatz baby) whereas no references are made concerning the absence of children in Marie-Françoise's life. Sue Harper (2000, 150) rightly argues that 'Leigh's preoccupation with family life has an inevitable consequence for his female characters, who are all judged by whether they are mothers or not'. The harsh and constant criticism of the female condition in *High Hopes* encourages me to believe that Leigh's point of view frequently verges towards misogyny. And since 'all the frustrated women are unable to have children' (Ruchti 1989, 22) in Leigh's films, he indirectly condemns women to adopt the idea of familialism contained within the Conservative Party ideology in order to achieve personal bliss. Leigh's position was no exception within the 1980s context and more often than not female characters were identified through their frustrations rather than their achievements.

The portrayal of women and family in 1980s French and British cinemas indicated a similar reflection on the difficulty for women to be present on the three fronts as mother, wife and worker. Despite the apparent evolution of the modern woman, the two national cinemas largely reverted to a traditional stereotype, praising the maternal presence within the nuclear family as the key to a woman's fulfilment. Of particular interest in this respect was the fact that most British and French films mentioned above were directed by male filmmakers who expressed their perceptions of the modern woman as financially independent while judging them ultimately through the traditional yardstick of motherhood. The fact remains however that French mothers were frequently given a second chance to have a family whereas British women were either childless or ran away from their family. A significant feature of the 1980s however was that even though both French and British films on many occasions, as we have seen, reverted to traditional views of femininity as ultimately grounded in motherhood, the traditional familial pattern was no longer taken for granted and as a corollary men's position was frequently questioned.

III - MEN AND FAMILY

The successful professional woman of French cinema and the new British woman in quest of more equality between genders forced men to redefine their position within the family unit. As a consequence, two frequent tropes of mainstream French cinema in the 1980s included men discovering paternity and men creating a new family unit through male bonding. Indeed, the issue of men and paternity illustrated by the commercial success *Trois hommes et un couffin* (5.2 million spectators) was a recurrent theme of 1980s French cinema with films such as *L'Homme fragile* (Claire Clouzot, 1980), *L'Année prochaine si tout va bien...* (Jean-Loup Hubert, 1981), *Les Compères* (Francis Veber, 1983), *Le Voyage à Paimpol* (John Berry, 1985), *Le Complexe du kangourou* (Pierre Jolivet, 1986), *Etats d'âmes* (Jacques Fansten,

1986) and *Les Cigognes n'en font qu'à leur tête* (Didier Kaminka, 1989). Similarly, the male bonding of the box-office success *Marche à l'ombre* (6.1 million spectators) echoed a widespread thematic approach found in *Pour cent briques, t'as plus rien* (Edouard Molinaro, 1982), *La Femme de mon pote* (Bertrand Blier, 1983), *Garçon* (Claude Sautet, 1983), *Tchao Pantin* (Claude Berri, 1983), *Paroles et musique* (Elie Chouraqui, 1984), *Escalier C* (Jean-Charles Tacchella, 1984), *Les Fugitifs* (Francis Veber, 1986) and *De sable et de sang* (Jeanne Labrune, 1987). Through male bonding, these films insisted on the marginalisation of women in order to reconstruct a new type of family unit.

By contrast, British cinema referred to lack of communication and extra-marital sex as an excuse to escape from the family with films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (Alan Clarke, 1987), *Personal Services* (Terry Jones, 1987), *Business As Usual* (Lezli-An Barrett, 1987), *High Hopes* (Mike Leigh, 1988) and *A Fish called Wanda* (Charles Crichton, 1989). In common with French cinema however, British cinema also introduced the idea of male bonding as a way of coping with new domestic constraints in films like *Betrayal* (David Jones, 1982), *Fords on Water* (Barry Bliss, 1983), *Mona Lisa* (Neil Jordan, 1986) *The Good Father* (Mike Newell, 1986) and *Vroom* (Beeban Kidron, 1988). But in the same way that the role of women was more systematically explored in 1980s French films than in British films, so was the role of men in the domestic setting (here too, it is also the case that the overall number of films was much larger in France compared to Britain). Men's similar incomprehension towards women in French and British cinemas frequently led to the exploration of a crisis in masculinity (see Powrie 1997 on French cinema and Hill 1999a, 168 on British cinema). No longer sure of the social role they were expected to play in their contemporary society, men discovered the art of muddling through in the 1980s.

1 - Paternity in France versus extra-marital sex in Britain

Rethinking the position of the father was an important issue on the political agenda of the French government in the 1980s. Shortly after the arrival of the Socialist Party in power, an influential law voted on 25th January 1982 enacted that the upbringing of a child entitled a man to adopt this child. Then, in 1984, the possibility of parental leave for fathers was introduced as a new gesture in favour of domestic equality. Finally in 1987, the Malhuret law made it compulsory for divorced couples to exert a joint parental authority over their children. While the French government decided to make inroads into the family through a series of legislation, the British government was reluctant to provide financial and legal help in favour of the family. The discourse of the Conservative Party was a rearguard attempt to encourage a return to the two-parent family with the father at work and the mother rearing children at home. As such, the family would remain a self-supportive unit and public spending would be kept to the minimum.

1980s French comedies offered a varied and complex image of the new father who faced the difficulties and joys of paternity. Yet, the major discrepancy with the representation of women and the family was that although for men the nuclear family was also given as the standard to reach in order to enjoy personal fulfilment, new types of family were positively presented. By contrast, the father and child relationship was not a central theme in British cinema and films such as *Runners* (Charles Sturridge, 1983) and *The Good father* (Mike Newell, 1986) were exceptions to the rule. In these films, men share with their French counterparts an incomprehension towards women, and the emphasis is placed on the difficulty of finding happiness within the boundaries of the traditional nuclear family. Most 1980s British films however avoided discussing men and paternity and preferred to focus on men and extra-marital sex as a way of resolving domestic issues. And even if sex was filmed as a thrilling exercise, 1980s films contrasted strongly with the permissive society depicted in 1960s and 1970s films

by underlining the feeling of guilt experienced by male protagonists. This condemnation led to a discourse encouraging the traditional nuclear family.

Because of its commercial and critical impact, *Trois hommes et un couffin* (1985) represents a landmark production in France in the 1980s, which was used at the time as a critical yardstick to refer to other films focusing on the role of paternity. For instance, Thierry Clech (1986, 60) wrote that 'by contrast with *Trois hommes et un couffin*, [*Le Complexe du kangourou*] illustrates the fear of the male protagonist to lose his independence. As a result, the story is less entertaining, less immediately funny'⁶¹. Play on words were made concerning the title of *Etats d'âme* (Jacques Fansten, 1986) which could have been called 'Five men and an uncle' (Braudeau 1986). And *Les Cigognes n'en font qu'à leur tête* (Didier Kamina, 1989) was seen as a film where adoption was a theme which took 'the recently vacant place left by Coline Serreau's cot' (Cieutat 1989, 67). A precursor of such films was *L'homme fragile* (1980) which provided a moving portrait of thirty-year-old Henri (Richard Berry) after his divorce deprives him of the daily presence of his child. Positively reviewed at the time as a convincing depiction of 'what are called the 'new fathers' these days' (De Montvalon 1981), it shared with *Trois hommes et un couffin* the fact that the question of men and family was addressed by a woman filmmaker — journalist and film critic Claire Clouzot.

Brigitte Rollet (1998, 140) considers that 'in the films Coline Serreau made in the 1980s — and she was not alone in choosing this trend — the target changed. It is no longer the couple, nor the people making up the couple, who fill the filmic space, it is the child'. I would argue however that the representation of the child, which went back as far as *Le Déjeuner de bébé* (Louis Lumière, 1895) to take one of the oldest examples, was used in the 1980s as a foil to underline the relationship between the father and his child, but that the latter was never the main subject of the film. Therefore, it was not so much childhood, but fatherhood, which was the subject of Serreau's film. In *Le Complexe du kangourou* (Pierre Jolivet, 1986), Loïc

(Roland Giraud) is a sterile man in his thirties who becomes obsessed with fatherhood and convinces himself, after his encounter with ex-girlfriend Claire (Clémentine Célarié), that her son Eric (Stéphane Duchemin) could be his biological son. Although this comedy remains a superficial study of Loïc's inner feelings, it is nevertheless his point of view which is adopted throughout the film and the boy's presence is simply a compulsory ingredient as narrative trigger, while the film explores Loïc's reaction towards paternity. Loïc's adoption of a black baby at the end proves that his attitude is not linked with the traditional desire to have a male heir but simply to bring up a child. Roland Giraud also features in *Les Cigognes n'en font qu'à leur tête* (1989) but this time as the adoption adviser checking if Jérémie (Patrick Chenaïs) and Marie (Marlène Jobert) would be suitable parents. In *Etats d'âme* (1986) the birth of Marie's (Sandrine Dumas) child on the 10th May 1981 works on a symbolic level because it corresponds to Mitterrand's arrival in power. The child's presence enhances the human side of the five young men encountered by Marie on the day her baby was born. And in *Les Compères*, Christine (Annie Duperey) contacts two ex-partners (Pierre Richard and Gérard Depardieu) to help her find her runaway child and stimulates their enthusiasm by suggesting their potential paternity.

By way of contrast, *The Good Father* (Mike Newell, 1986) and *Runners* were rarities among 1980s British films in their thematic approach to fatherhood. *The Good Father* is a bitter battle of the sexes commissioned by Channel Four where Bill Hooper (Anthony Hopkins) perceives the arrival of his child Christopher (Harry Grubb) as the destructive element of his marriage with Emmy (Harriet Walter) as well as a block to his creativity as a novelist. Although Bill considers that the custody of a child is not necessarily a woman prerogative, he cannot love his son in this 'study of male anger and repressed emotion of a peculiarly British type' (Berry 2001, 248). *Runners* tells the story of Tom (James Fox) searching for his missing eleven-year-old daughter Rachel (Kate Hardie) in the streets of London two years after her

disappearance while his wife remains at home in Nottingham. What is worth noting in *The Good Father* and *Runners* is the development of an affair for Bill and Tom. Besides the difficulties of these two fathers to reassert the relationship with their respective child, the subplot reinforces the destruction of the family unit by including an affair. In fact, while French men discover paternity as a necessary ingredient of family life, British men run away from it and reaffirm their identity through extra-marital sex. In *A Fish called Wanda* (Charles Crichton, 1989), Archie's (John Cleese) sexual awakening is representative of what some French critics have identified as a widespread theme in 1980s British cinema. Thus scholar Philippe Pilard (1989, 120) argues that 'Sex: either homosexual or heterosexual, a certain English cinema keeps discovering it, not only in the dialogue (the notorious 'four letter words') but also in action. One does not talk about it only but shows it on the screen'. Similarly, in *La Revue du cinéma* Alion and Colpart (1988, 43) consider that 'in order to condemn the excessively prudish behaviour of Albion's sons and daughters brought up within the respect of a fossilized tradition, it is natural that these films refer to matters of sex'.

Whereas the family rarely constituted a major theme in British films of the 1980s, sex was a theme on its own, illustrating the impossibility for British men to ally the traditional family picture and the joy of sex. Indeed, films like *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987), *Personal Services* (1987), *Business as Usual* (1987) and *A Fish called Wanda* (1989) reflect the dual interpretation of the British family frequently given by sociologists as 'at one and the same time the favoured cultural image for security, trust, warmth and intimacy and the commonly blamed source of boredom, burdens, unavoidable pressures and relationships that are wished on you rather than chosen' (McIntosh 1984, 206). Thus *Business as Usual* (1987) tells the story of the unfair dismissal of Babs Flynn (Glenda Jackson). Intermingled with the main plot is the everyday life of her husband Kieran (John Thaw) who stays at home and looks after his son and granddaughter. Here the role reversal has been forced on Kieran by the economic

situation after he has been made redundant⁶². Through a succession of vignettes, the slow pace of the camera enhances Kieran's feeling of boredom while he is minding the children (at home, in the street with the pushchair, at the supermarket). Kieran belongs to this category of men in northern working-class films of the 1980s who, 'forced to adjust to unemployment and lack of income become increasingly associated with domestic space and intra-familial tension' (Hill 2000b, 252). In order to counterbalance his personal unhappiness due to unemployment and his wife's new-found involvement with trade unions, Kieran has an affair with Joan (Mel Martin), a young and attractive journalist, in order to forget about his feeling of emasculation. Bob (George Costigan) in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987) also expresses the ambiguity of British family representation even if his interpretation is less cerebral than Kieran's in *Business As Usual*. Although this social comedy deals with two babysitters having sex with the father of the children they are looking after, the two girls are never seen with the children. There is only one static shot of Bob with his children while he is watching his wife leave after the discovery of his infidelity. And it appears that the *raison d'être* of this unique father and children scene is merely to emphasize the rapidity of his wife's reaction. Advertised as 'Thatcher's Britain with its knickers down' (Brindle 2000, 3), *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* presented itself as 'novel' in its consideration of sex as a central theme. While its director Alan Clarke (Kelly 1998, 180) commented that 'it's quite unusual for a British film to be about sex', *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* explores, on the contrary, a typical 1980s theme. Bob is the unfaithful married man who puts the blame on his wife for her lack of enthusiasm for sex ('I want you to enjoy it'). Here reproduction is out of the question as Bob's urge for sex leads to the destruction of his own family with Michelle while Rita's miscarriage reflects the sterile relationship that Bob can offer. As lead actor George Costigan (Kelly 1998, 176) comments about the sex scene on the moor, 'it's just clumsy and real and fumbling about, it's not sexy and it's not shot to be'. No romance is expected from this *ménage à trois* and sex is simply

linked with physical pleasure. Similarly, in *Personal Services* (1987), one of Christine's (Julie Walters) regular customers justifies his presence in her homely brothel by the inability of his handicapped wife to satisfy him sexually. The common theme between *Personal Services* (1987), *Business as Usual* (1987), *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987) and *A Fish called Wanda* (1989) is that the infidelity of the four men is condoned because of the attitude of their respective wives: the impotence of the customer's wife, the involvement of hard-looking Babs (Glenda Jackson) in the world of trade unions, the frigidity of Michelle (Lesley Sharp) and the rigidity of Wendy (Maria Aitken). Already in 1970 Raymond Durnat commented that in British cinema 'marriage tends to be seen as a transcendent loyalty rather than as an expression of the erotic — the latter tending to appear, at best, a luckily irresistible bait, sometimes, a danger, and more often, an aspiration which makes men heartbroken and women ridiculous' (Durnat 1970, 177). It is an opinion of equal validity to many British films of the 1980s. Extra-marital sex therefore is represented as the only alternative to Archie's question 'Don't you have any idea what it's like to be English?'⁶³. In order to remove themselves as far as possible from the stereotype of the traditional British family, these men have sexual intercourse with partners from different social classes (Kieran in *Business As Usual* and the middle-class customer in *Personal Services*), ages (Bob in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* and Bill in *The Good Father*) or nationalities (Wanda in *A Fish called Wanda*).

1.1 - Case study: *A Fish called Wanda* and *Trois hommes et un couffin*

At first sight *Trois hommes et un couffin* (1985) and *A fish called Wanda* (1989) have little in common except for being two of the most popular comedies at the French and British box office of the 1980s. But the popularity of these two films, together with the caricature that they offered of 1980s masculinity, call for a more detailed study as well as a comparison. Another element which justifies the choice of *Trois hommes et un couffin* and *A Fish called*

Wanda in this chapter is their typicality in relation to their national cinema, in so far as men and family life were frequently found within the main storyline in 1980s French films, whereas it only constituted a subplot in British films of that period. Coline Serreau was not a beginner at the time⁶⁴ she made *Trois hommes et un couffin*, but this film is the one which clearly established her as a key director of the 1980s. The film received both critical success as well as unexpected commercial success initiated primarily by word-of-mouth. With over ten million viewers, the film is one of the best-sellers of all time on the French market (CNC Infos 1991a, 22) and it obtained three Césars in 1986 (best film, best script and second best male performance for Michel Boujenah). Made on a small budget of FF 9.7 millions (Beylie 1987, 91), starring three relatively unknown actors (Michel Boujenah, André Dussolier and Roland Giraud), the enormous success of this film was unexpected in the same way that *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* was an astonishing success in 1988⁶⁵. Unable to cope with her work as an international model and the care of her baby Marie, Sylvia (Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu) leaves her child outside the biological father's door in *Trois hommes et un couffin*. Finding a baby on their doorstep, the father and two of his friends, all three bachelors in their early thirties who share a flat, have to adapt to the situation against their will. They become genuinely infatuated with the child who has managed to turn their lives as well as their emotions upside down.

In comparison, the more commercially-oriented *A Fish called Wanda* aimed at a bigger audience even if its international recognition was not planned on such a large scale. At the heart of this project stood *Monty Python's* John Cleese as one of the star actors as well as the co-writer and co-director. His collaboration with seventy-seven-year-old Charles Crichton⁶⁶ firmly placed his project in the tradition of British comedy. American producers financed *A Fish called Wanda* and its foremost success in the States was confirmed in Britain and Australia. *A Fish called Wanda* is a fast paced comedy which first of all deals with a diamond

robbery in London. In the subplot, Archie Leach's (John Cleese) encounter with Wanda (Jamie Lee Curtis), and their romance, sets the married barrister free as they both flee to Rio.

An aspect of *Trois hommes et un couffin* which was frequently referred to by critics was its French specificity as the film was described as 'a comedy of manners *à la française*' (Jampolsky 1986, 46), a comedy '*à la française*' (Brauschweig 1985, 60) and a 'charming comedy of manners *à la française*' (Leclère 1985b). According to Brigitte Rollet (1998, 116), Serreau's comedies contain 'specifically French' elements: dialogues, the choice of actors and actresses and the social and political context⁶⁷. In the same way, critics underlined how Archie Leach (John Cleese) in *A Fish called Wanda* played on the English stereotype of his character: 'an honest lawyer stuck up like an Englishman' (Katsahnias 1989, 58), 'Archie is an unhappy gentleman, too English and uptight as a result of his education' (Braudeau 1989), 'the barrister, secretly tired of [...] everything English and proper' (Pym 1988/89, 65). Although, as John Pym (1988/89, 65) rightly argues in *Sight and Sound*, what grounded John Cleese's performance into the 1980s was the addition of sex which clearly made *A Fish called Wanda* 'an 80s comedy' (a similar argument is developed by Pilard 1997, 98)⁶⁸. Since both comedies have already received a large amount of criticism analysing the reason for their immense success, what remains to be done is to compare the specificity of the representation of men in the domestic sphere in these two films by stressing the differences of *mise en scène* and family rituals.

First, however, the identification of *Trois hommes et un couffin* as a film analysing the nature of family requires further discussion since critics have adopted different views towards this issue. On the one hand, Françoise Audé (1985, 70) considers that as far as Coline Serreau is concerned 'she ignores the family', while on the other hand Brigitte Rollet (1998, 137) argues that the film 'questions men's role within the family unit'. In my view, the *mise en scène* and the presence of family rituals observed earlier, together with the representation of the nuclear

family corroborate Rollet's position. As in a traditional family, the child invades every communal room (kitchen, bathroom, living room) within the spacious flat and progressively the three men swap the privacy of their bedrooms as well as their lives outside the flat and remain increasingly within each others' company.



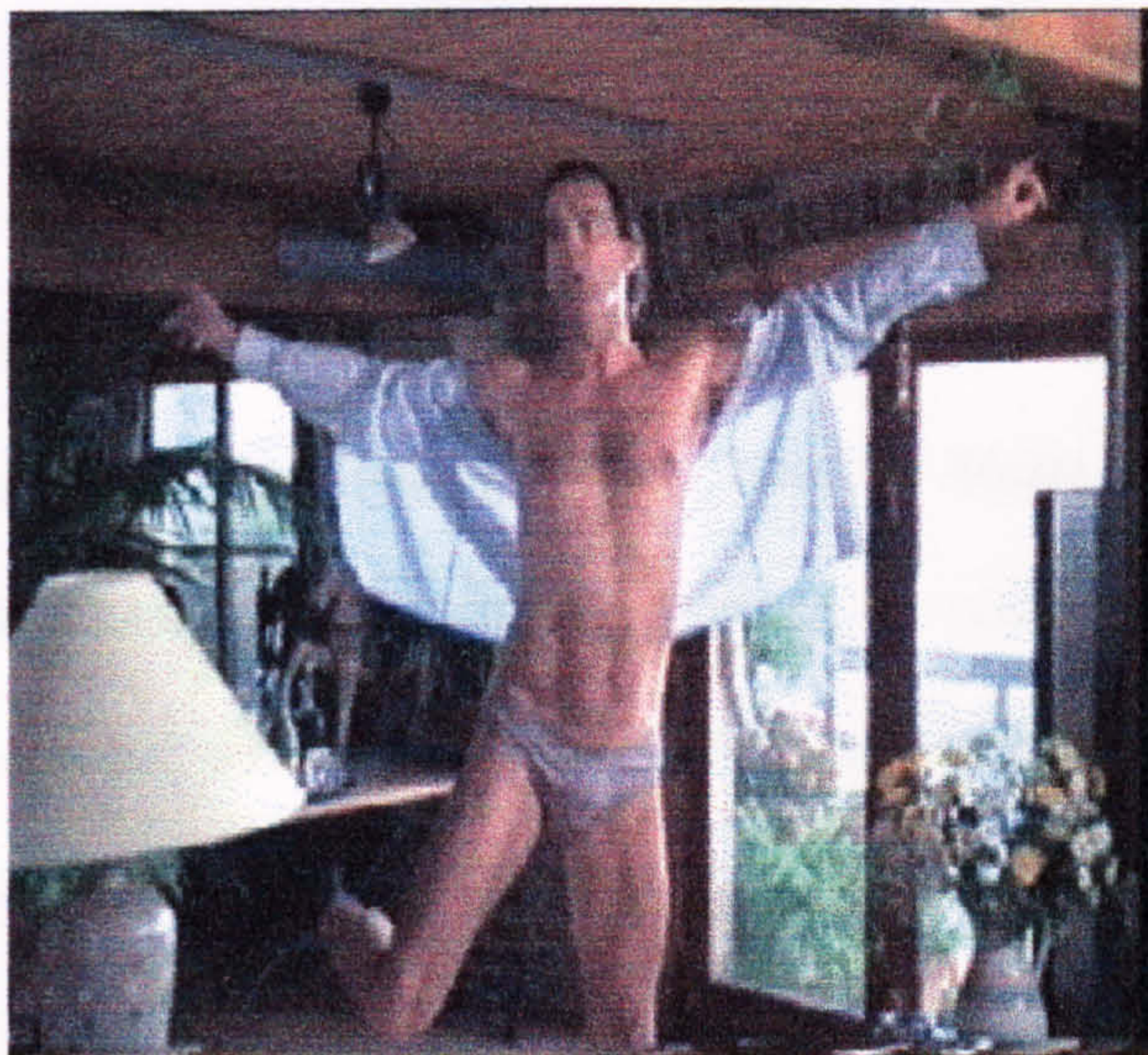
Trois hommes et un couffin: Michel (Michel Boujenah), Pierre (Roland Giraud) and Jacques (André Dussolier) singing Marie to sleep.

Gradually the three men become associated with inner space. As for family rituals, they occupy a more central position than when professional single mothers are described: shopping, breakfast, meals around the table, exploring shared preoccupations in the living room as well as bedtime gathering over the baby's cot. Even if *Trois hommes et un couffin* constructs a subverted family, its *mise en scène* is nevertheless based on a typical family unit. The indoor scenes of *Trois hommes et un couffin* insist on creating an osmosis between the audience and the characters by the use of close shots. When Michel falls asleep with Marie in his arms, the camera slowly tilts up, lingering on Marie's and Michel's faces in order to highlight the closeness between the two characters. *Trois hommes et un couffin* allows the audience to enter the intimacy of the three characters and the sartorial code is used to create the impression that Michel, Pierre and Jacques are similar to the audience: like us, they

wander around their flat in their dressing gowns. This aspect of *Trois hommes et un couffin* was widely found in French cinema and helped to construct a 'cinema of everyday life' (for instance a 'pyjama scene' can be found in *Un monde sans pitié* (1989), *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* (1988), *La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (1988)).

By contrast, Archie Leach dislikes physical contact with his family and his relationship with his wife and daughter is based on a series of domestic habits executed in a mechanical way (making tea, parking the car, having breakfast...). Thus the use of medium shots emphasises the distance between the members of the Leach family. The bed scene reveals Archie Leach and his wife Wendy (Maria Aitken) in their outdated underwear meticulously folding their clothes but, by contrast with *Trois hommes et un couffin*, the motivation behind this scene is to emphasise the ridiculousness of their stiff upper-lip Englishness. The parallel editing with the sensual sex scene between Wanda (Jamie Lee Curtis) and Otto (Kevin Kline) reinforces the mechanical as well as comical aspect of the Leach routine. It is true that part of the comic recipe in *A Fish called Wanda* is based on the overtly displayed sexuality of the American Wanda and Archie's consequent embarrassment. During Wanda's first visit to Archie in his office, she uses her sexuality as a weapon to achieve her goal. Her pointing out at his wig (which Archie symbolically throws away during his final escape with Wanda) underlines the need for the British lawyer to live in a world of disguise in order to be respected. Archie's decision to sit behind his desk is not motivated by practicality but symbolises his need to protect himself from Wanda's threatening sexuality. It is significant that Archie's excuse to start an affair with Wanda is not triggered off by guilt towards marital vows but merely by his reluctance to be unfaithful to his professional vows as a lawyer. Set in a luxurious flat by the Thames (and not in his house where years of marital restraint would have made his liberation impossible), the sexual liberation of Archie is one of the set pieces of the film. Moving constantly from one side of the screen to the other until he fully occupies the screen when

taking off his shirt, Archie is depicted for the first time as a 'free man'. And the regular close shots of Wanda's legs while Archie talks to her in Italian contributes to the image of Archie setting himself free from his set role as a middle-class Englishman through sex and the use of another language.



A Fish called Wanda: Archie Leach (John Cleese) on his way to sexual liberation.

The comic element comes from the discrepancy between Archie's appearance as a middle-aged man and his teenage excitement at the discovery of true love making. Archie is no longer a source of ridicule but he embodies a character on the verge of liberation, which incidentally starts with his wearing of sexier underpants. But the romantic music stops with the sudden arrival of a family visiting his flat in order to buy it, forcing Archie back into his former role as embarrassed English gentleman until his liberating escape to South America. Family life in *A Fish called Wanda* depicts Archie as a hen-pecked figure imprisoned in the golden cage that Wendy bought for them. Therefore Archie's infidelity is justified in a stereotypically misogynist way by the coldness of his spouse whose poise, static haircut, pearl necklace and royal blue jacket in one of the final scenes moreover strongly evokes Margaret Thatcher's appearance. Archie's rebellion against a stifling family life is solved through the creation of

another heterosexual unit but the final on-screen message that 'Archie and Wanda were married in Rio and had seventeen children' clearly mocks the family.

In *Trois hommes et un couffin*, the choice of three men living together was made 'to confirm the protagonists' virile heterosexuality (two men might be suspect) and to minimize the risk that child care might feminise them' (Forbes 1987, 170). But this feminisation takes place naturally and in a more visible way with Michel (Michel Boujenah) whose shoulder-long curly hair and plumpness echo his maternal side. For Françoise Audé (1985, 70) 'Coline Serreau watches them looking less manly as their love for Marie grows. Their love is more maternal than paternal'. One may go slightly further by considering that an harmonious atmosphere is finally reached within this household when the three men accept their maternal side and therefore are able to cope with the upbringing of Marie by being both her father and mother. Although the final scene showing Sylvia asleep in Marie's cradle has been read by André Dussolier (Schapira and Touret 1987, 102) as Coline Serreau's 'desire to reverse roles, to allow women to rest, become dependent and let men be in control', another reading of this scene which is certainly more accurate is to consider that Sylvia 'is admitted into the men's space only on condition that she is infantilised' (Forbes 1987, 170), hence avoiding threatening the newly established equilibrium⁶⁹. While *Trois hommes et un couffin* illustrates how the three bachelors create a family-like organisation around Marie, *A Fish called Wanda* portrays a stereotypically misogynist, if comic, view of the nuclear family (repressed and repressive wife, hen-pecked husband), out of which sex with a younger woman is the only way out, but a way not open to the wife.

2 - Male bonding

Already in 1981 Françoise Audé (1981, 117) wrote that 'First puzzled, then worried, always upset, man from 1975-78 reveals an extreme sensitivity towards new women's behaviours'

and 1980s French cinema continued to explore new family units as well as male bonding triggered by men's incomprehension of women. Such a feature was more sparsely found in British cinema which concentrated on the estrangement of men within the family circle. The general tendency was to express the need for male bonding in a more open and straightforward manner in French films (*Pour cent briques t'as plus rien* (1982), *La Femme de mon pote* (1983), *Garçon* (1983), *Tchao Pantin* (1983), *Paroles et musique* (1984), *Marche à l'ombre* (1984), *Escalier C* (1984) and *De sable et de sang* (1987)) whereas British cinema encouraged the audience to read between the lines (*Betrayal* (1982), *Fords on Water* (1983), *The Good Father* (1986), *Mona Lisa* (1986) and *Vroom* (1988)). The crisis of masculinity mentioned above corresponded to different representations when related to the family. Before developing this point with further examples, an analysis of *Paroles et musique* (Elie Chouraqui, 1984) and *Vroom* (Beeban Kidron, 1988) provides an illuminating example as to how young men were depicted in relation to the family.

2.1 - Case study: *Vroom* and *Paroles et musique*

The choice of these two films is motivated by the fact that, although they begin with a rather similar structure (the friendship of two men in their mid-twenties) as well as the affair with an older woman for one of them, both conform to a positive image of the family and the possibility for men to create a new family unit in the French film while the British one rejects family and leaves the main protagonist to his loneliness. *Vroom* and *Paroles et musique* respectively present Jake (Clive Owen) and Ringe (David Thewlis) and Jeremy (Christopher Lambert) and Michel (Richard Anconina). The actors were relatively unknown actors at the time; however David Thewlis would find international recognition with *Naked* (Mike Leigh, 1993) as would Christopher Lambert in *Greystoke* (Hugh Hudson, 1984) while Richard Anconina in *Tchao Pantin* (Claude Berri, 1983) achieved a more immediate popularity in

France. Set in a small Yorkshire town and with a black and white opening scene echoing the 1960s, *Vroom* can be considered as an updating of the 'kitchen sink' movie while *Paroles et musique* is a light comedy *à la française* dealing with modern life in Paris. From the very beginning these two films establish a long lasting friendship between the two men by underlining a common code of dress and identical physical behaviour: Jake and Ringe run frantically around the city wearing a suit and a raincoat while Jeremy and Michel sing on stage in white shirts. Many similarities occur in the way these two pairs of friends work. Physically, Jake and Jeremy both have a classical beauty by being tall, well-built, having regular features and a broad smile whereas Michel and Ringe are smaller, skinny and with expressive and angular faces. The complementarity of the two men in both films suggests that they represent two sides of the same man, as if one man was not enough anymore in the 1980s. Despite a similar introduction of the two men's friendship, the films are poles apart in their representation of the family. In *Paroles et musique* Jeremy is attracted by the glamorous maternal image of Margaux (Catherine Deneuve), mother of Charlotte and Elliott. In order to become an adult, Jeremy needs to go through symbolic stages of development with the help of an expert mother. In sexual terms, the idea of a new beginning in a virginal environment is conveyed by the whiteness of the room and Margaux's clothes. Jeremy enjoys a reclusive life inside the flat with Charlotte and Elliott (they share breakfast, watch television, wait for Margaux to come back home). When he comes to term with his adult sexuality, the camera insists on his position as Margaux's lover by filming him wandering around the flat in his boxer shorts. A shot of Jeremy shaving announces not only his full adult stage but also the masculine threat that he now represents for Margaux who asks him to leave. Therefore, the warmth and stability of Margaux's family is seen as a necessary cocoon for the maturity of the young man. The second part of *Paroles et musique* shows how Jeremy transfers his recently acquired knowledge of family life into his everyday life with Michel. Once again Jeremy is

associated with inner space, but this time he is shown in control of the situation as he cooks for Michel. The inner organisation of their friendship possesses the intrinsic features of family life based on spatial representation (they live under the same roof and their flat is not divided into two but used as a single unit where they both sleep in the same room) and the presence of rituals (cooking for each other, bedtime conversations, regular phone calls). While the visual representation of Jeremy and Michel refers to a familial organisation, it also puts the two protagonists in an ambivalent position between hetero and homosexuality. This feature was indeed noticed by critics at the time, with Jacques Siclier (1985a) claiming that 'if these friends had been homosexual, their friendship would have been at stake' while Marie-Françoise Leclère (1984b) suggested a more complex issue: 'What a peculiar couple, without the slightest homosexual connotation, represented by these two men who reinvent a way of coping with the outside world, achieved in the past exclusively by the family unit'.

By contrast, *Vroom* features characters for whom family life is denied. Whereas Jeremy falls for an extremely attractive mother figure (Deneuve) in *Paroles et musique*, Jake is equally attracted by the sophistication of Susan (Diana Quick), a divorcee who embodies the failure of family values in *Vroom*. Through Jake's eyes the first shot of Susan in slow motion picking up her bag ironically recalls a cheap prostitute trick. Susan's identity is constructed through sexual images: her sequin dress refers to cheap thrill, her making love to Jake on the floor, the camera tracking her walking along the street with her ex-husband following her in his car continuing the prostitute stereotype. Even if Jake, Ringe and Susan living together in an abandoned country house can be perceived as a new type of family unit, the failure of their project is announced by the lack of family rituals or any routine. In a manner typical of 1980s British films, the outcome of the friendship between the three protagonists is sterile as they all end up by themselves. Like the image of the lonely and disenchanted woman given by Susan,

family is excluded from the narrative which, as noted by John Hill (1999a, 170), requires magical realism (Jake flying above the city) as the only positive ending.

Themes developed in *Vroom* and *Paroles et musique*, such as male bonding, new family unit in French films and loneliness in British films, were not specific to these two films. Male bonding in 1980s films was not limited to friendship but was connected to family representation, which therefore can be interpreted as a crisis of the family unit as well as a crisis in masculinity. One noteworthy aspect of French reviews was the way they linked male bonding with family relationships. For instance, in *Cinématographe* Olivier Dazat (1984b, 69) not only described the pioneering aspect of the couple formed by François and Denis but saw in Denis's ailment 'the symptoms of a pregnant woman'. And in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* the friendship of Lambert (Coluche) and Bensoussan (Richard Anconina) in *Tchao Pantin* (1983) was also perceived in terms of family as 'an ersatz father and son relationship' (Ostria 1984, 47). The need for a family unit concerns men from different age groups: *Escalier C* (1984) focuses on a group of people in their thirties while *Garçon* (1983) deals with an ageing Alex (Yves Montand) and his friend Gilbert (Jacques Villeret) sharing the same flat while working as waiters in a Parisian restaurant. Undoubtedly provocative in the Bertrand Blier tradition, *La Femme de mon pote* (1983) depicts the arrival of Viviane (Isabelle Hupert) as one more 'thing' that Micky (Coluche) and Pascal (Thierry Lhermitte) end up sharing out of friendship. Viviane's departure is perceived as a return to normality and the two heterosexual men can resume their daily routine.

As in *Paroles et musique*, these films can be read as the exploration of new family structure because male friendship is mixed with images of family life, that is to say the routine of domestic life as well as the family rituals mentioned earlier. Creating a familial atmosphere between two men is mainly conveyed by regular meals and shared habitat. *Tchao Pantin* (1983), *Garçon* (1983), *Escalier C* (1984) or *Marche à l'ombre* (1984) all share a similar

emphasis on men cooking and eating together. These regular meals replace the stereotype of male professionals eating out together by the image of male domesticity away from the public sphere: Claude making breakfast for Forster every morning in *Escalier C*, Lambert and Bensoussan making eggs for each other at night in *Tchao Pantin*, the intrusion of Claire (Nicole Garcia) causing chaos in the breakfast routine of Alex and Gilbert in *Garçon*, and Denis making hot chocolate for François in *Marche à l'ombre*. With the exception of *Tchao Pantin* (although the two protagonists spend their nights together at the petrol station), the idea of a new family unit is visually represented by men living under the same roof, be it a squat, a flat or an apartment blocks. In the context of 1980s British films, male bonding rarely dealt with such a precise description of domesticity on screen and in that sense *The Good Father* was an exception. On Christmas Day, a brief scene shot from outside the house shows Bill cooking while Roger and the two boys are setting the table. The Christmas decoration and the artificial snow on the window contribute to the iconography of a typical Christmas scene. Then the camera moves inside and the next shot reveals Bill carving the turkey in the foreground while Roger and the children are sitting in the background singing. But the happiness of this scene is suddenly interrupted and the next scene is in sharp contrast with Bill violently knocking on his ex-wife's door in a dark corridor. *Mona Lisa* is about George's vital quest for rebuilding a family in order to survive. As such, the final shot of George, his teenage daughter (Zoe Nathenson) and his best friend Thomas (Robbie Coltrane) walking hand in hand has been described by scholars either as 'an image of the 'reconstructed' white family (Hill 1999b, 168) or 'one contented 'family' unit' (Young 1996, 167). Although it is undeniable that the final scene evokes male bonding and possibly a reconstructed family, its actual visual representation merely lasts for an extremely small proportion of the entire story and unlike in the above French films domestic routine of their lives is not included in the plot. The case of *Betrayal* (David Jones, 1982), based on a play by Harold Pinter, also refers to the

importance of male bonding through the friendship of Jerry (Jeremy Irons) and Robert (Ben Kingsley). Here male friendship does not turn into the creation of a new type of family unit but is used to highlight men's loneliness within their own family. The evocation of the intimacy of the post-squash shower (playing squash is 'more than just a game') and the pub lunch that follows retains various innuendoes, including the possibility of homoeroticism.

In cases such as Jake and Ringe in *Vroom*, Bill and Roger in *The Good Father* and Jerry and Robert in *Betrayal*, loneliness was a prominent feature of the depiction of men in 1980s British films. In these cases, men's inability to fight back their reluctance to accept women's changing roles with new types of family units led to loneliness either inside or outside the family. In that respect, French films offer a much more positive image of men to the point where they can colonize the domestic sphere and assert their homosociality (the fact that actors are more popular at the box-office than actresses can explain this choice to a certain point) whereas British men on screen have to choose between the conventionality of family life or the loneliness of men who do not fit into society. Thus Jerry and Robert in *Betrayal* (1982), Tom in *Runners* (1983), Frank Pollock in *Meantime* (1983), Frank Bryant in *Educating Rita* (1983), Bill Hooper in *The Good Father* (1986), Kieran Flynn in *Business As Usual* (1987), Bob in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987) and Archie Leach in *A Fish called Wanda* (1989) all present a portrait of estranged men within their families. Their way of coping with the situation necessarily implies escape whether physical through extra-marital affairs (Tom, Archie, Bill, Bob and Kieran) or moral (alcoholism for Frank Bryant; lack of communication for Frank Pollock). With the exception of Archie who finally succeeds in having the 'perfect' family life (albeit in a comic way) in *A Fish called Wanda* (one may suggest that the input of American money in the film production influenced the ending), the escape of British men from the traditional nuclear family meets with failure. As such, the vision of family life

provided by British filmmakers was very conservative in its condemnation of any form of family structure other than the nuclear family.

IV - GROWING UP IN THE 1980s

In the 1980s, teenagers represented the bulk of French and British film audiences and as such the youth market played an important role in the two national film industries. A survey made by the *Centre National de la Cinématographie* (CNC Infos 1991b, 23) revealed that in the 1980s whereas young people aged between 15 and 24 years old only represented 19% of the population over the age of fifteen, they made up 35% of the cinema audience. In Britain, a survey made in 1984 (Docherty, Morrison and Tracey 1986, 83) established that the 18-24 age group constituted the core of regular attenders while 80% of the regulars were aged between 16 and 29 years old. Despite a similar high proportion of teenagers as part of the regular attenders, French and British cinemas adopted very different attitudes towards this specific audience. In France, the film industry joined forces in order to satisfy this audience category by making films directly addressing this part of the population. Even if there is a genuine tradition in French films of teenagers in leading roles, critics unanimously agree that in the 1980s French cinema produced even more films focusing on teenagers than during the previous decades. For Stephane Brisset (1990, 121) 'the treatment of childhood and adolescence is an essential theme and the 1980s appear as the most productive decade in that respect' and Thérésa Faucon (1996, 183) adds that 'it is remarkable to see how youth and maturity form the two-sided enigma of this cinema. Never were so many adolescents shown on the screen'. Whether the directors belong to the *auteur* or mainstream category, filmmakers showed a real enthusiasm for focusing on teenagers. An extensive list of these films is not necessary here but pertinent titles include *Surprise Party* (Roger Vadim, 1982), *L'Homme blessé* (Patrice Chéreau, 1982), *A nos amours* (Maurice Pialat, 1983), *Pauline à la plage* (Eric

Rohmer, 1983), *36 Fillette* (Catherine Breillat, 1987), *Au revoir les enfants* (Louis Malle, 1987), *De bruit et de fureur* and *Noce blanche* (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 1987 and 1989), *La Vie de famille* and *La Fille de quinze ans* (Jacques Doillon, 1984 and 1988), *L'Effrontée* and *La Petite voleuse* (Claude Miller, 1985 and 1988) and mainstream comedies like *La Boum* and *La Boum 2* (Claude Pinoteau, 1980 and 1982), *L'Été de nos quinze ans* (Marcel Jullian, 1983), *P'tit con* (Gérard Lauzier, 1983), *A nous les garçons* (Michel Lang, 1984). By contrast, teenagers were rarely given lead roles in British films. In fact, teenagers were seldom found as central characters in British cinema which seemed to have lost interest in teenagers since 1960s films such as *If...* (Lindsay Anderson, 1968), *A Taste of Honey* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (both Tony Richardson, 1961 and 1962) all major reference points. In the 1980s, teenagers in lead roles were only found in a handful of British films, namely *Looks and Smiles* (1981), *Gregory's Girl* (Bill Forsyth, 1981), *Meantime* (1983), *Party Party* (Terry Winsor, 1983), *The Emerald Forest* (John Boorman, 1985), *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (Alan Clarke, 1987), and *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987). As a result, a breach was left wide open in the British market for American commercial films to supply the teen market with films directly addressing teenagers. In France, the American invasion was slightly more controlled by counterbalancing the appeal of Hollywood teen movies with a substantial French production.

The limited number of 1980s British films, set in contemporary Britain and focusing on teenagers, means that they will all be taken into account as case studies, with the exception of *Wish You Were Here* (1987) set in the early 1950s and *The Emerald Forest* (1985) set in Brazil. On the French side, due to the considerable number of films where teenagers played a central part, a selection has to be made. Although the French films chosen to illustrate this topic can always be challenged, here is my choice and the reason why they represent a significant sample. Among the best-sellers of the decade *La Boum* (1980) with 4.5 million

spectators in France alone and 15 million in Europe (Arbaudie 1982, 12) and *La Boum 2* (Claude Pinoteau, 1982) with 4 million spectators in France can be seen as the archetypal youth movies of the decade. Not only were they popular, but they acted as important reference points in the press for other films on the same subject. While Bernard Genin (1985) discouraged the reader to believe that '*L'Effrontée* is *La Boum* by the lake', Serge Daney (1985) praised the 'anti *Boumique*' aspect of *L'Effrontée* for its 'understanding of adolescence'. Louis Skorecki (1985a) considered that *A nous les garçons* was 'a dirty remake of *La Boum*'. Jacques Siclier (1983) claimed that with *L'Été de nos quinze ans* producer 'Marcel Dassault aims at the spectators of *La Boum 1 and 2*' and *Pauline à la plage* was seen as a 'classy *Boum 2*' (Carrère 1983). Even filmmaker Maurice Pialat (Goldschmidt and Tonnerre 1983, 3) commented 'if it is not *La Boum*, it is sordid'. Enthusiastically received by critics as well as the public, *A nos amours* (1983) provided an example of an *auteur* film dealing with teenagers and family life. The film reached the quite honourable figure of 952.000 spectators. *L'Effrontée* (2.7 million spectators in 1985) will be included for its representation of a working-class teenager and her single father living in rural France and *36 Fillette* for its unusually straightforward approach towards teenage sexuality by female director Catherine Breillat.

1 - Communication between teenagers and their parents

As underlined by Carrie Tarr and Brigitte Rollet (2001, 25), 'the family is conventionally the site of the formation of identity, the place where the child achieves a sense of self according to whether or not s/he feels loved and valued, and a sense of identity in relation to others'. One of the major discrepancies between French and British representations of teenagers in relation to their parents was the degree of communication between the two generations. Problematic or absent communication between parents and their offspring appeared as a common

denominator of the representation of teenagers in 1980s British films. Shot in black and white, *Looks and Smiles* (1981) gives a portrayal of three teenagers — Mick (Graham Green), Alan (Tony Pitts) and Karen (Carolyn Nicholson) — from Sheffield and studies their approach towards family and work. Whereas Alan and Karen are raised by a single mother, Mick has been brought up in a nuclear family. The first shot of Mick introduces him in a tense conversation with his father about his desire to join the army and the camera alternating between the two male characters' faces highlights their antagonism. Later the fluidity of the camera, moving from the mother to the father and the son, establishes a link between them which contradicts the possibility of a deep-anchored split between the father and his son. Indeed, scriptwriter Barry Hines explains his common intention with Ken Loach to depict Mick's family as 'a loving family' (Nave 1981, 14). It is undeniable that Mick's parents are supportive, illustrated by the father and son scene in the garage where they lean close to one another over the newspaper and the mother and son scene where she puts her hand on Mick's shoulder while reading the letter of rejection. The warmth of the nuclear family is also expressed in the breakfast scene where the packet of Kellogg's Corn Flakes together with the pot of tea and the pint of milk on the table symbolise the security of domestic habits. By contrast, Alan's lack of support from his single-parent family is reflected by him sitting in front of a cup of tea at an empty table. However, even if Mick and his parents represent the stability of family life, no personal feelings are verbally expressed and Mick's love story with Karen remains outside the family circle.

This absence of intimate conversation within the family is given a much more humoristic treatment in Bill Forsyth's comedy *Gregory's Girl* (1981). Set in a Scottish new town, *Gregory's Girl* features Gordon John Sinclair (Gregory), a teenager whose life is changed by the arrival of Dorothy (Dee Hepburn) in his school football team. Gregory is a teenager living in a semi-detached house whose order reflects a functioning family. And yet Gregory's mother

is never seen, his father only once and Gregory is only seen at home in the company of his younger sister, with school friends and on his own. By shooting Gregory going from one room to another and from the first floor to the ground floor, the *mise en scène* of Gregory's morning routine insists on him being on his own. However, the on-screen absence of Gregory's parents passed unnoticed by French critics who described *Gregory's Girl* as depicting the social and familial environment of a Scottish teenager. For instance Jean Roy (1984) praised the film because 'the character is well described in the same way that his surroundings are well described (parents, younger sister, teachers, friends)' but remained blind to the absence of the mother on screen and the brief presence of the father. The chance encounter between Gregory and his father (a driving instructor) where the father arranges a meeting time at home with his son uses the comedy mood to highlight the absence of communication within a family living under the same roofs. Unlike their British counterparts, French films incorporated various forms of communication as a necessary ingredient of family portrayal. Thus, in *La Boum 2* (1982), a comedy about the everyday Parisian life of sixteen-year-old Vic (Sophie Marceau) and more particularly her discovery of love with Philippe (Pierre Cosso), the family gathers regularly. Despite the hectic timetable of the professional middle-class parents, the quick pace of the film is given narrative pauses in order to allow the family members to spend time together. For example, the local Italian restaurant is the favorite place where important news is broken to the entire family (the mother's pregnancy, the father's decision to become a full-time researcher). This ability to communicate is not the prerogative of the middle class only. In *L'Effrontée* (1985), thirteen-year-old Charlotte (Charlotte Gainsbourg) is brought up by her father (Raoul Billerey), a tool-maker, and Leone (Bernadette Lafont) the housekeeper in a small village. Charlotte's father, puzzled by the new behaviour of his daughter, was described in the press as 'a loving and understanding father despite his rough appearance' (Sartirano 1985). Even if Charlotte's father

is not articulate, he comforts her when she needs him (the scene when insomniac Charlotte sleeps in his bed) and he acknowledges his own limitation by encouraging her to talk to Leone about 'female problems'. In *36 Fillette*, Catherine Breillat presents it as a 'film about communication' (Paskin 1989, 40). The story is about fourteen-year-old Lili (Delphine Zentout) on a camping holiday near Biarritz with her parents (Adrienne Bonnet and Jean-François Stevenin) and her brother Gi-Pe (Stéphane Moquet). Obsessed with the idea of losing her virginity (the film's English title is *Virgin*), Lili plays a seduction game with Maurice (Etienne Chicot), a forty-year-old computer distributor, before having sex with her teenage neighbour. The argument which takes place between Lili and her parents in the caravan is verbally violent ('you're a whore') before the father loses his temper and slaps her. Yet the tension between the protagonists and the shot reverse shot of Lili's and her father's faces are immediately counterbalanced by the father's need to hug his daughter. Even if Lili's behaviour goes beyond the understanding of her parents, there is still a physical communication highlighted by a static camera which includes the four members of the family in medium shots.

2 - Question of point of view

On a formal and narrative level there were similarities in French and British films as the major difference was between functional and dysfunctional family units. What partly differentiated harmonious family units from split families was that in the case of the united family the narration was shared between the different members of the family and the point-of-view shots varied accordingly, whereas in dysfunctional families the camera reflected more directly the teenager's perspective. For René Prédal (1999, 50) the broken family of *A nos amours* (1983) perfectly illustrates this tendency by giving a 'portrait of family life which only corresponds to Suzanne's experience. It is therefore partial, or even biased'. With the same

cinéma-vérité aspect present in Pialat's earlier films, *A nos amours* is centered on Suzanne (Sandrine Bonnaire), a young Parisian girl who finds herself in the middle of a highly conflicting relationship with her mother (Evelyne Ker) and elder brother (Dominique Besnehard) while her father (Pialat himself) deserts the home. Whether in relation to the mother's hysteria or the father's disinterest, Suzanne plays the role of the observer and this one person narration, made of a succession of highly conflictual interactions, increases the tension experienced by the young girl. The same can be said about Karen's (Carolyn Nicholson) attitude towards her mother in *Looks and Smiles* and Sue (Michelle Holmes) observing her parents in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*. By contrast, a parallel montage is frequently used in *La Boum 2* to include short scenes where the parents discuss Vic's behaviour (for instance their waiting for Vic in the middle of the night) and deal with their own couple (their holidays in Tunisia). Similarly, in *L'Effrontée* Charlotte's point of view is counterbalanced by comments made by her father and Léone. In order to ensure Charlotte's omnipresence on screen, the two adults either address each other or talk to themselves in front of Charlotte. In that respect, *36 Fillette* stands apart in its deliberate lack of point of view (Vincendeau 1989, 41) which leaves the audience free to appreciate the relationship between Lili and her family instead of judging one of the protagonists. With the use of medium shots, both Lili's obsession with losing her virginity and the parents' disapproval of their daughter's quasi affair with an older man are presented without being condemned. This absence of point of view transcribes Lili's transitional stage where her relationship to her parents is distorted by her malaise.

The difference between united families and broken homes is also clearly expressed through types of shots. In films describing harmonious relations within the family the characters are usually presented together in medium shots as in *La Boum 2*, *L'Effrontée*, and Mick's family in *Looks and Smiles*. But when depicting broken homes, the antagonism between the family members is translated by the camera alternating between the the protagonists or by shot

reverse shot. While in single-parent families these types of shots convey the break-down in communication between the teenager and one of his/her parents, in the broken nuclear family it insists on the teenager taking one of the parents' sides. Thus, in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* Sue defends her mother against her alcoholic father. In the scene where the two babysitters are confronted by Michelle outside Sue's flat, the father is shot on his own while the mother and daughter are always on the same shot and the arrival of the bikers leads Sue to protect her mother by wrapping her arms around her. In *A nos amours* numerous scenes in close-up show the father and daughter in intimate conversations whereas the mother and daughter scenes are filmed in medium shots fighting. The scene where Suzanne asks to go to the cinema shows Suzanne and her father in close shot talking together in the foreground while the mother remains in the background. Then at table Suzanne and her father sit on the same side of the table while her mother sits on the other side with Suzanne's brother. However, the most striking example concerning camera work among these films is found in the representation of Karen and her mother (Cilla Mason) in *Looks and Smiles*. In the scene when Karen comes back from the cinema to find her mother waiting, only shot-counter-shot is used during the entire conversation and the extreme close shots of their faces increase the feeling of tension. Through this technique the camera implies that the gap between the two protagonists has become unbridgeable.

3 - Mother and daughter

Through the prism of Suzanne's and Karen's experience, home is associated with familial tension and lack of communication between mothers and daughters. The *mise en scène* in *A nos amours* underlines the vastness of the flat which allows the characters to roam at leisure without the frustration of a confined space. Being the place where Suzanne's parents have been living and working as artisans in the fur trade, the flat — thanks to the accumulation of

objects and furniture — is impregnated with the atmosphere of a lifetime (the mother explains that this flat has been all her life for the past twenty years). The daily presence of employees who become understanding witnesses of family arguments, contributes to the impression of continuous activity in the flat. While the use of medium shots in *A nos amours* plays down the internal tension, the close shots of the characters in *Looks and Smiles* heightens the lack of perspective as if Karen and her mother were trapped inside their flat. Instead of being a protective cocoon, the flat transcribes both a limited horizon and extreme loneliness which is metaphorically represented by Karen's single budgerigar in a cage. The permanent inner violence expressed by Karen's and Suzanne's mothers is due to the bitterness of losing their husbands' love. After the fathers' desertion, the two mothers are presented as castrating and hysterical women, a portrayal interpreted by Ginette Vincendeau (1990, 265) in the case of *A nos amours* as Pialat's 'undoubtedly misogynistic' comment. At first the mothers share an incapacity to show maternal love to their daughters who are equally puzzled by their mothers' reactions. But as the films develop Suzanne's mother in *A nos amours* screams at her daughter that she loves her whereas Karen's mother in *Looks and Smiles* lets her go. In both films, an authoritative male presence is imposed by the mother on her daughter as the proof of their weaknesses in terms of authority within the family. Suzanne's and Karen's escape from home after a last paroxysmic argument with their mothers is typical of the commonly found resolution of British 1980s films. While Karen's useless trip to Bristol is symptomatic of this absence of perspective through a miserabilist approach in British cinema of the 1980s, Suzanne's flight to the States gives a more positive ending towards the so-called land of freedom (as in *Paroles et musique* and *Marche à l'ombre* (both 1984)). And even if Suzanne and Karen express the same rejection towards their mothers, Suzanne becomes closer to her father while Karen bitterly discovers that she has been excluded from her father's new nuclear family.

4 - Father and daughter

'Don't you find it strange that parents and children never want to talk about it?'

(The father to Suzanne in *A nos amours*)

Sexuality is a recurrent theme in films associated with teenagers, as their coming to terms with adulthood is closely linked with their discovery of sex. Focusing on French cinema, Susan Hayward (1993a, 258) considers that 'female nubile sexuality was very much a preoccupation in male filmmakers' work in the 1980s'. But if the 1980s depicted teenage sexuality on screen more openly, the dichotomy between the image of teenagers in the outside world and at home remained strong, as conversation about sex was still presented as a taboo subject between parents and teenagers. In that respect, the decision of Vic's mother in *La Boum 2* to face her responsibilities by advising her daughter to see a gynaecologist while Vic's grandmother is more preoccupied by Vic losing her virginity are rather unusual, in particular in mainstream cinema. However, although parents and children rarely talk about sexuality, the need of the female teenager for a father figure was often used to introduce the young girl's attraction for an older man, as in *Taxi boy* (Alain Page, 1986), *La Fille de quinze ans* (Jacque Doillon, 1989), *Noce blanche* (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 1989). As noted by Ginette Vincendeau (1992, 16) 'a surprising number of French films in the 80s and 90s take up the father-daughter storyline, with seduction scenarios which sometimes go as far as incest'. Largely ignored by scholars and critics, as we shall see this privileged father-daughter relationship also existed in British cinema only in a more subdued form.

For the female teenager, the image of the father is the reference used to evaluate her own boyfriend. When the father figure is missing or inadequate, a relationship with an older man is presented as a compensation in the development of her personality. In *La Boum 2* there is a reciprocal admiration between the father and her daughter. After the concert scene, high-angle shots of Vic in her boyfriend's (Pierre Cosso) arms in the street late at night alternate with

close shots of her father (Claude Brasseur) watching her through the window. The jealousy of her father is quickly replaced by a paternal feeling when she hugs him to be forgiven for being so late. After showing the father's puzzled face while he holds Vic in his arms, the camera tightly frames the two protagonists talking to each other until the father kisses her goodnight on the forehead, an innocent kiss recalling Vic being kissed by her boyfriend. Later in the film, Vic's attraction for the slightly older Felix (Lambert Wilson) is motivated by the fact that he possesses all the attributes of virility at the age of twenty five: masculine hands (underlined by a close shot on them on the keyboard), a tie and a car. But the requirements of mainstream cinema dictated that Vic returned to a more conventional relationship with a younger boyfriend.

Gérard Lenne (1989, 28) considers that the follow up of Sophie Marceau's career and her role as Brasseur's lover in *Descente aux enfers* (Francis Girod, 1986) may be seen as 'an incestuous fantasy in the collective unconscious'. Apart from the exotic setting, *Descente aux enfers* pictures Sophie Marceau and Claude Brasseur in roles whose similarities with *La Boum 2* are obvious (middle-class, Parisian, same dress code, same haircut). But this time the film multiplies the signs of Sophie Marceau's sensuality as well as scenes of her making love to Claude Brasseur. *36 Fillette* insists on Lili's attraction and repulsion for an older man like Maurice. With the potential sexual partner represented by Maurice, Lili uses her latent sexuality to feel that 'she is his equal' (Malcolm 1989, 21) and as a revenge on her father's authority. In *A nos amours* the attraction between Suzanne and her father is much more outspoken and as Ginette Vincendeau (1990, 266) rightly says 'For Suzanne may have a "dry heart", it still belongs to one man, her father'. The ambiguity of Suzanne's relationship with her father has been minutely analysed (Magny 1992, Prédal 1999, 49-58, Vincendeau 1990, 257-68) and Pialat/the father has been accused of developing a secret love for Sandrine Bonnaire/Suzanne (Goldschmidt and Tonnerre 1983, 6). But because 'right from the start love

and sexuality are two different things for Suzanne' (Prédal 1999, 51), the possibility of incestuous love is denied. Among all these films referring to the need of the female teenager for a father figure, it is worth mentioning Agnès Varda's attempt in *Kung Fu Master* (1987) to play with this stereotype by showing the mutual attraction of single mother Mary-Jane (Jane Birkin) and a thirteen-year-old boy Julien (Matthieu Demy). Unlike the ambiguous attraction of a young girl for an older man considered as a typical Oedipal reaction, the mutual attraction between this young boy and a middle-aged woman is heavily condemned by society. Contrasting with the elated flute on the soundtrack and the fluid camera filming their secret and platonic love on a remote island two thirds into the film, silence and static shots whose depth-of-field enhances a feeling of emptiness symbolise Mary-Jane's condemnation in the public eye at the end.

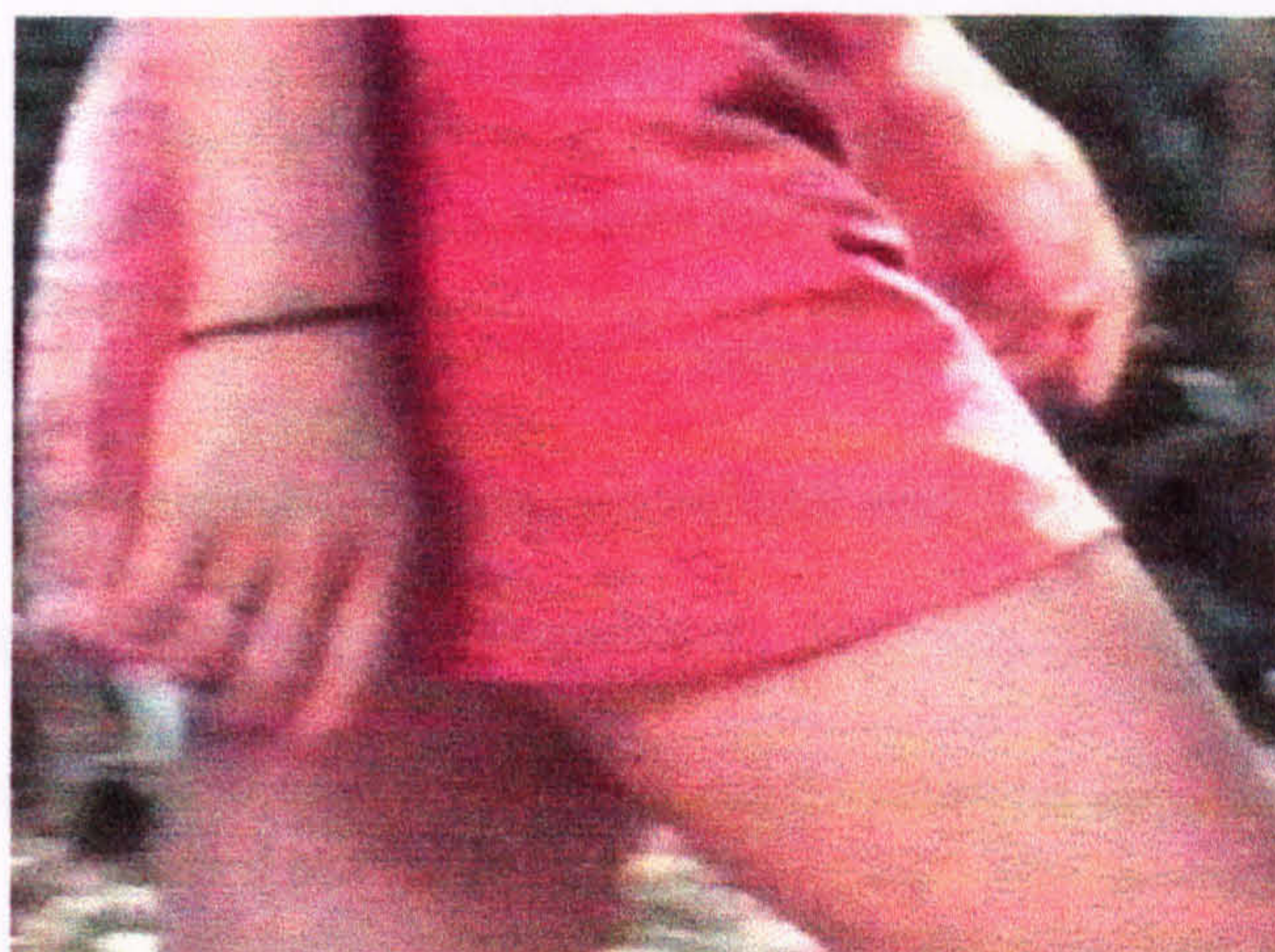
By contrast with 1980s French films, the level on which the father and daughter relationship is established in *Looks and Smiles* is not so sexually connoted. The absent father can be considered as the cause of Karen's difficulty to become involved in a long term relationship. Unable to accept her parents' divorce, Karen appears to be in favour of the traditional nuclear family. But unlike French films which suggest the father's and daughter's ambiguous feelings, here the medium shot of Karen's father taking her in one arm while holding his baby boy in the other draws a parallel between the two children, thus rejecting any sexual innuendoes. Despite the previous shot of Karen holding the baby as an acknowledgement of her new status as a woman, this evolution is only perceived by her boyfriend looking at her. While the attraction of a female teenager for an older man was seen as a search for a father figure in French cinema, *Rita*, *Sue and Bob Too* did not seem to benefit from the same justification among French critics who understood the girls' behaviour in terms of a social crisis (Godard 1987, Roy 1987 and Sabouraud 1987, 64) while British critics underlined more particularly sex as cheap entertainment (Doyle 1987, 38, Roddick 1987, 18 and Wootton 1987, 282). In

the scene taking place on the moors, Bob has sex in his car with the two virgin babysitters Rita and Sue, one after the other. The irony of the scene is achieved by the moonlit field in the background as a stereotype of romantic scenery while no romance exists between the protagonists in the foreground. What is surprising in the critical reception of the film is how their sexual encounters were reviewed. Here the amorality of their behaviour (the affair, teenage pregnancy, *ménage à trois*) was understood as a sign of the director's bad taste or a description of teenage spontaneity. While in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* Adrian Wootton (1987, 282) saw a feminist perspective in the attitude of Rita and Sue, I would argue that, on the contrary, *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* is far from offering a progressive social commentary in a film where female teenagers consider sex as the only alternative to their economic situation. Thus, the two girls' attraction for Bob is not related to his being a father figure but by the economic recession which forces them to be financially supported by an older man with a secure job.

5 - Image of teenagers

By contrast with the ordinariness of British teenagers, French female teenagers played on their highly sexualised image. French cinema of the 1980s saw the emergence of female teenage actresses on the screen who would later achieve the status of national and in some cases international stars, such as Sandrine Bonnaire in *A nos amours* (1983), Sophie Marceau in *La Boum* and *La Boum 2* (1980 and 1982), Charlotte Gainsbourg in *L'Effrontée* (1985), Juliette Binoche in *La Vie de famille* (1984), Judith Godrèche in *La Fille de quinze ans* (Jacques Doillon, 1989) and Emmanuelle Béart in *Manon des sources* (Claude Berri, 1986). These young actresses all shared an incredible presence on screen as well as physical beauty. Writing about Suzanne in *A nos amours*, Ginette Vincendeau (1990, 265) argues that she is 'a "typical" adolescent of the 1980s in terms of surface realism: her clothes, her relationship to

her friends, to men, especially her language'. Yet it seems that 1980s French cinema held two types of 'typical' adolescent: the polished portrayal of Vic in *La Boum 2* and the more sexually aware Suzanne in *A nos amours*. Significantly, these two characters were often presented as being opposite sides of the same coin of French adolescence on screen. To the question 'what depicts adolescence best?' *A nos amours* and *La Boum* were given as examples by film critic Gérard Lenne (1989, 28). Similarly, Stéphane Brisset (1990, 122) explained that 'To Pialat's violent family, Claude Pinoteau prefers Sophie Marceau's more healthy one' and Olivier Dazat (1984a, 9) wrote in *Cinématographe* that 'Luckily, there is the anti-Marceau, the indefinable Sandrine Bonnaire, sulky and saucy'. *La Boum 2* uses an obvious ellipse in order to avoid filming the young girl naked. Since physicality for its own sake is avoided, it has to be justified by scenes focusing on Vic's sensuality, such as the dancing lesson and the bet with her friends in which Vic pretends to be a prostitute and her father discovers her pacing down the street in a leather miniskirt. By contrast, Suzanne is repeatedly filmed naked or half naked with the impression that the camera has a voyeuristic attitude when waiting for her to undress before bedtime. Suzanne and her father evoke the sensuality of skin in *A nos amours*: the father is filmed cutting delicately the fur while a succession of close shots reveals Suzanne's skin and 'natural' sensuality in slow motion.



A nos amours: Suzanne's (Sandrine Bonnaire) miniskirt.

In *A nos amours* the camera follows Suzanne closely and seems to be hypnotised by her miniskirt which becomes a focal point. Such attention on an adolescent's miniskirt is also present in *L'Effrontée* where Charlotte's (Charlotte Gainsbourg) latent sensuality at the age of thirteen is drastically put forward by this item of clothing. Meanwhile, in *36 Fillette* high-angle shots emphasise Lili's voluptuous breasts, the part of her body which Maurice always touches first as if hypnotised by it.

By contrast, British cinema chose its teenagers for their ordinariness, a feature which is consistently noted by French critics but ignored by British ones. As regards *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, French critics highlighted the discrepancy between Rita and Sue and the image of the young English woman widely propagated by 1980s heritage films such as *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1986). Thus Rita and Sue 'really do not look like the fragile, pale and easily scared Victorian heroines. With their strong legs and firm knees, clearly visible under their short skirts, Rita and Sue are blunt and like to enjoy themselves' (Godard 1987), 'two young girls depicted as vulgar and fat whose only dream is to get fucked' (Douin 1987) and 'two little fat girls [...] whose only entertainment is to get fucked' (Sabouraud 1987, 64). Before commenting on the performance of Gordon John Sinclair (Gregory) as an actor in *Gregory's Girl*, his 'unusual' lack of plastic beauty was repeatedly pointed out by French critics (and completely ignored by British critics) as an opening comment: 'the virgin prone to acne' (Leclère 1984a), 'tall, lanky, slightly spotty' (Trémois 1984), 'resolute and spotty' (Vitoux 1984), 'a lanky great lump' (Marcorelles 1984)⁷⁰. Indeed, British cinema of the 1980s avoided to shoot adolescents' sensuality in such a sexualised and evocative manner as in French cinema. In *Gregory's Girl*, Dorothy (Dee Hepburn) does not wear a miniskirt but a pair of football shorts. In comparison with French teenagers mentioned above and despite Gregory's ecstatic comments, Dorothy's image is rather bland (even if British reviews talked about 'the beautiful Dorothy' (Pym 1981, 114) and 'the gorgeous centre forward' (Adair 1981, 206)).



Gregory's Girl: Dorothy (Dee Hepburn) being chatted up by Gregory (Gordon John Sinclair).

Karen in *Looks and Smiles* never puts her sensuality forward, either through her clothes or the control of her body. The only scene including burgeoning sensuality which shows Karen in bed with Mick is turned into a scene of shame and embarrassment by the arrival of Karen's mother. It is as though 1980s British cinema had to remove itself temporally or geographically to display the sensuality of an attractive adolescent: Emily Lloyd as a liberated teenager in the 1950s in *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987), Charley Boorman in Brazil in *The Emerald Forest* and Sammi Davis during the Second World War in *Hope and Glory* (both John Boorman, 1985 and 1987). As far as the choice of young actors/actresses was concerned, Ken Loach (Fuller, 1998 59) for *Looks and Smiles* and Bill Forsyth (Vaines 1980, 4) for *Gregory's Girl* explained that they wanted to make a film about 'ordinary kids'. On a financial level, it is interesting to note that Forsyth's choice of making films about teenagers (*That Sinking Feeling*, *Gregory's Girl*) in the earlier stage of his career was simply motivated by the fact that 'they were cheaper' (Vaines 1980, 4). The attitude of British filmmakers in the choice of teenage actors/actresses was very different from French directors who believed that their exceptional performance made the film possible: Maurice Pialat (Goldschmidt and Tonnerre 1983, 6) praised Sandrine Bonnaire's 'incredible talent' in *A nos amours*, Claude Miller (Rousseau 1985) believed that Charlotte Gainsbourg was 'divine' in

L'Effrontée and Claude Pinoteau (Leclère 1982) considered that *La Boum/La Boum 2* would not have been so popular without the performance of 'a born-actress' like Sophie Marceau, chosen among six hundred candidates.

The tendency to depict a more united family in French films versus a lack of communication in British films was confirmed in films focusing more particularly on teenagers. Similarities existed between British and French films in the way the camera work expressed the perception of family life through the teenager's point of view. However, the main discrepancy was the way French films played with the idea of teenage sensuality/sexuality whereas British films focused on the ordinariness of teenagers. While teenagers occupied a central position within the family in many French films in the 1980s, the rare British films depicting them underlined parental's lack of interaction with their children.

CONCLUSION

The dinner scene at the French family of Clara Paige's lover in *Paris by Night* (David Hare, 1988) epitomises the fundamental discrepancy in the family representation in the two national cinemas. The first shot opens on two women making a pot-au-feu⁷¹ in the kitchen while the guests partake in the pleasure of cooking. The camera then follows them into the dining room where three generations are present around the table. The ensuing pan shot on the family members expresses Clara's point of view as an observer of family life in France: they are all talking at once, the conversation is polemical, the mother bends down to talk to her eight-year-old daughter. The scene contrasts dramatically with previous representations of family life provided by Clara's own family where the verbal and physical communication remains limited to a minimum. In fact, Clara's presence in this French family testifies to her need to escape from her own family in the first place. From a more general point of view, this chapter shows that British filmmakers depicted the family as a problematic unit in crisis while their

French counterparts adopted a more positive view. In this sense, Alan Williams's (1992, 400) claim that 'the pessimistic view of life conveyed in recent film dramas of living in — and leaving — the family is perhaps merely the most visible symptom of a profound nihilism that lurks beneath the surface of much serious French narrative filmmaking of recent years' seems excessive and reflects the very restricted sample he considers. As we have seen, his assessment is contradicted by the reading of family life in many other French films, especially mainstream films. In British cinema the father, the mother and the children equally accomplished a movement from the domestic sphere to the outside world which expressed an urge to escape from the family in order to discover themselves. An opposite movement from the outside world to the family arena was generally advocated in French cinema where the family was regarded as a retreat against social and economic changes. However, this general tendency has to be refined through a more detailed analysis of gender roles within the family. In common with the feminist discourse, which denounced the family for its oppressive quality in relation to women, French and British cinemas encouraged women to have a life of their own outside home. However, they failed to deliver a scenario presenting fully-fledged women outside the traditional nuclear family. In this sense, a certain sexism can be perceived in the more complex exploration of family form for men. In French films men experience the difficulties to create a nuclear family, yet alternative solutions — if not as satisfying as the traditional family — are nevertheless presented as positive. Often triggered by economic and social changes, the breakdown of traditional family life in British films gave men the opportunity to escape from the family and, in most cases, recreate a new family unit with younger women — after putting the blame on wives whose their lack of understanding was the cause of men's desertion.

In the two national cinemas children greatly influenced the internal dynamic of the family. Without being as radical as Suzanne Moore (1991, 97) who states that 'British attitude

towards children still remains that they should be *seen* but not *heard*, British cinema lacked a genuine interest in children which may explain the inability of British families in films to construct themselves as a complete entity. Whereas French films insisted on the central role played by children in the family, British films presented children and parents as two different units living under the same roof. By being perceived as miniature adults (hence the common representation of the female teenager as a Lolita), French children were given an authoritative voice which entitled them to participate fully in the life of the family. And thus their presence turned the family into a stronger unit more capable of caring for each member as a protector. By contrast, British films considered children as potential adults who had not yet acquired a fully functioning stage and therefore did not deserve adults' attention, and moved in parallel to their parents. The consequences of having children within the family were rather understood in social rather than personal terms. The representation of the family in French and British films can be described as both reflecting the changes within the 1980s society and taking into account the specificity inherent to the two cultures.

Conclusion

The intrinsic characteristics of the British and French film industries became much more palpable during the 1980s as the existing gap between the two was increased by the policies adopted by the Conservative government in Britain and the Socialist government in France. While the British film industry suffered important financial cuts in its (partly) public-funded institutions (the BFI and the NFFC/British Screen), the French film industry enjoyed substantial governmental help aimed not only at the production sector but also at the distribution and promotion of films. On an economic level, it is obvious that each state influenced its national cinema by, on the one hand, turning the British film industry into an even riskier business, and on the other hand, allowing the French film industry to be more daring thanks to generous public backing. In relation to the nature of the films produced during this decade, the connection with the state was much more complex. In Britain, the setting up of Black cinema workshops was no doubt associated with a governmental decision to give a voice to the ethnic minorities and as such can be seen as a direct influence of the government on film production. In France, the relationship between *beur* cinema and the role played by the government was more tenuous even if there are reasons to believe that there was a degree of special state help through the action of the commission for *avances sur recettes*. More significantly, French cinema on the whole was influenced by the significant increases (up to twice as much) of the *avance sur recettes* which secured help to first/second films and *auteur* cinema, and the *soutien automatique* which favoured more systematic reinvestments into the film industry. Therefore, *auteur* cinema and the quest for new talents were greatly encouraged by public policy and subsidies. The continued preponderance of comedies in mainstream cinema was a market-fed decision largely dictated by popular demand within a long generic tradition. In Britain, the aesthetic choice of a cinema influenced by realist aesthetics, indebted to a long and prestigious tradition, was also the result of decisions made by people at the head of the BFI, the NFFC/British Screen and Channel Four

(even if governmental policy influenced film budgets by limiting state financial help). The general aesthetic trends in British and French films referring to contemporary society in the 1980s was thus the combination of historical genres and financial structures under the guidance of the state and decisions made by institutions whose choices largely remained autonomous.

In terms of content, British and French cinemas were also extremely different, given their historically-anchored aesthetic and generic ways of representing social issues. Although it is true, as John Hill (1999a, 244) claims, that 'the 'Britishness' of the British cinema in the 1980s was neither unitary nor agreed but depended upon a growing sense of the multiple national, regional, and ethnic identifications which characterized life in Britain in this period', it is also true that in terms of genre most of the British films depicting contemporary life in Britain belonged to the social-realist trend. Unlike big-budget British productions (such as *Chariots of Fire*, *Gandhi*, *The Killing Fields*, the *James Bond* series), these films often failed to attract audiences at the box-office, dominated by Hollywood, whereas a higher percentage of indigenous genre films in France found a reasonable home audience. It could also be argued that the entertainment provided by British cinema dealing with contemporary issues was usually too close to what television could offer. By contrast, national box-office successes in France were both big-budget films which did well on the international market and medium-budget films aiming more specifically at the French audience through cultural references to contemporary society. The size of the audience in France was still large enough for a medium-budget film to recoup its investment on the national market only. The comparative study offered by this dissertation has hopefully shed light on the representation of society in the two national cinemas, mostly through very diverse genres and discourses. In the 1980s, the general tendency of British cinema was to associate people with their function or social category while French cinema usually focused on the personal over the professional and as a

result found it easier to ignore existing barriers separating various social groups. In fact, British cinema demonstrated that personal struggles were useless in the face of governmental adversity and French cinema underlined the capacity of its protagonists to sort themselves out despite circumstances. The vision of society given by 1980s British cinema offered the recurrent pattern of a 'patchwork' society made up of individuals living side by side, separated by social classes, gender, ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds. Although most British filmmakers (Lindsay Anderson, Lezli-An Barrett, Alan Clarke, David Hare, Stephen Frears, Ken Loach and Franco Rosso, to name but a few) dealing with the representation of 1980s society had in mind to denounce the everyday living conditions under the Thatcher government, the paradox of their cinema was that it ultimately denied a progressive vision of society. These filmmakers not only highlighted the absence of hope in a divided society but also arguably corroborated Margaret Thatcher's slogan that, considering the state of British society, there was no possible alternative. Doomed by determinism, Britain was presented as a class-bound society with no place for changes. Any kind of emancipation at work, within the family or among the ethnic community was condemned in the end. By contrast, a majority of French films put the emphasis on the social cement existing within society. Exposition of social problems was generally followed by solutions, albeit largely utopian, in order to turn society into a better place. As a result, these films have frequently been criticized by scholars as too consensual.

This dissertation analyses films under three thematic angles: society, work and family. In relation to society, 1980s British cinema offered a portrayal of a fragmented and yet class-bound society and in that sense illustrated Margaret Thatcher's claim made in 1983 that 'there is no such thing as society, only individual men and women and their families' (Harwood 1997, 15). By contrast, French films tended to tone down the differences between individuals, thus depicting a convivial society in which the personality of the protagonists was more

valued than their social status. A similar discrepancy was found in British and French films dealing with work and unemployment in the 1980s. Including themes such as unfair dismissal, unemployment among the ethnic population and the refusal to join the labour market, the representation of unemployment was mostly found in mainstream French comedies and in social-realist British films. Most French films tackling this issue provided an optimistic vision of French society, even in social-realist films set in the *banlieue* in which the outcome of the experience of unemployment was human friendship developed through common hardship. By way of contrast, British cinema was much more pessimistic in its representation of unemployed characters presented as the innocent victims of economic circumstances.

British and French cinema showed that the family was essential to the fulfilment of men and women. Yet, in French films other familial patterns were presented as potential ways of redefining the traditional nuclear family and a movement from the outside world to the family arena (seen as a protective cocoon) was largely advocated. In British films, an invisible partition between the protagonists gave the impression of them living as separate entities with verbal and physical communication limited to a minimum. This was reflected spatially, for instance, in the predominance of around-the-table scenes in French films, as opposed to television watching moments in British films. The predominance of the social-realist genre in British cinema and comedy in French cinema explains to some extent the dichotomy in the depiction of their respective societies. However, one may wonder whether this coherent image found in British and French films was also triggered by the actual state of the two societies as well as their evolution during the 1980s.

In order to illustrate this point, the example of women in relation to work and family will be taken. Playing a central role at the heart of family life in British and French films, women experienced how difficult it was to combine the role of wife, mother and worker. It appears

that in British cinema, women found it much harder to succeed in all areas and their search for a better life outside the family circle was recurrently met with the same feeling of failure despite a certain degree of emancipation. Women were not judged so harshly in French cinema even if the depiction of their experiences insisted on their problematic position. In fact, one of the major differences between British and French women was that for the latter having a job was understood as 'normal'. As for the role of children, in British cinema they lived side by side with their parents and in French cinema they strongly contributed to reinforce the link between the different members of the family thanks to their central roles. The comparative studies made by sociologists Linda Hantrais (1992, 987-1015 and 1996, 58-9) and Eva Lelièvre (1994, 61-89) on women and family in Britain and France during the 1980s can be looked at to verify whether the tendency of the two cinemas echoed a genuine social trend in society. Hantrais and Lelièvre argued that even if at first sight demography in Britain and France was very similar during the 1980s, an in-depth analysis reveals that the situation facing British and French women was in fact extremely different. Although the fecundity rate was the same in the two countries (1.8) throughout the decade, 20% of women remained childless in Britain versus 10% in France, thus making infertility in Britain one of the highest in Europe and that of France one of the lowest. In the same way, the rate of extra-marital birth followed an identical progression in Britain and France increasing from 11.5% in 1980 to 28% in 1989. Yet, only 3% of these births were from French women under 20 in comparison with 22% in Britain. As Eva Lelièvre (1994, 87) explains, in 1980s Britain, births outside of marriage indicated a social and economic deterioration, especially because most of these girls were not in a settled relationship. By contrast, extra-marital births in France corresponded to the project of unmarried couples to have children together. In Britain, the family represented the locus of personal freedom within the private sphere and as such the intervention of the state was limited to the family in need. Conversely, in France the state was

expected to intervene in family life and a series of measures in favour of women and work were introduced during the decade.

Going back to the representation of the family on-screen and the role of women in particular in 1980s British and French cinemas, it therefore appears that the general pessimism of British films and the consensual aspect of most French films echoed social and economic trends. For instance, screening more childless women in British films than in French films did correspond to a social reality. And even if the aim of this dissertation was not to measure the gap between the representation of contemporary Britain and France on screen and its reality, the example of family representation reveals that the global picture offered by these films was not so removed from contemporary society. What also contributed significantly to such a different way of presenting society were generic choices. Comedy has always been central to French film tradition, yet in the 1980s it became the predominant genre to refer to society. Since French comedy has, until recently, largely been neglected by scholars (in particular French scholars), it has been generally agreed that 1980s French cinema tended to ignore social issues. This work has hopefully demonstrated that, although 1980s French cinema offered a consensual view of society, social representation was nevertheless part of its preoccupations. On the contrary, the fact that 1980s British cinema, through realism, referred to society has scarcely been questioned and most scholars agreed on the topical nature of this cinema. Yet, behind its stringent appearance, 1980s British cinema ultimately favoured a return to traditional values. By comparing the two national cinemas on thematic and aesthetic levels, it appears that, on the whole, the vision of society was, contrary to critical dogma, mildly 'progressive' in French cinema and somewhat 'reactionary' in British cinema in the 1980s.

Footnotes

¹ As far as the definition of a nation itself is concerned, Benedict Anderson's (1983) notion that a nation corresponds to an *imagined community* has been widely accepted by film scholars. For Anderson, a nation represents a group of people sharing a sense of common identity whose boundaries are drawn by a precise geographic and political area. And people's impression of belonging to a particular nation thanks to their cultural and social backgrounds is reinforced by the role of the state.

² Jill Forbes also wrote a more general survey about protectionism in French television (Forbes 1983, 28-39).

³ By contrast with the French film industry where statistics were carefully collected by the *Centre National de la Cinématographie*, 'few subjects illustrate so clearly the British passion for secrecy and mystery than the distribution and exhibition of feature films' (Petley 1991, 30). Even if the registration of new releases has never been compulsory, in the eighties the Department of Trade and Industry stopped collecting film statistics as specified in the 1985 Film Act. From that year onwards data were made available thanks to the work of independent researchers, especially the invaluable work of Docherty, Morrison and Tracey (1987).

⁴ In addition to this manifesto, one could read Mitterrand's intention towards the cinema and television in an interview given in April 1981 (Mitterrand 1981, 6-7).

⁵ Although it has to be said that the CNC was inspired by the Comité d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique (COIC) started under the Vichy government.

⁶ British Screen and the BFI were also funded by a contribution from Channel Four.

⁷ Bourgois and 10/18 are known for publishing quality contemporary literature.

⁸ Key films such as *Burning an Illusion* (Menelik Shabazz, 1981), *Young Soul Rebel* (Isaac Julien, 1983), *The Passion of Remembrance* (Isaac Julien and Maureen Blackwood, 1986) and *Handsworth Songs* (Black Audio, 1986) contributed to turn Black British films into a recognized movement.

⁹ June Givanni (1988, 39-41) underlined the vital role of the distribution and exhibition of Black British films, and explained that the lack of sales and screening is largely due to the format of the 130 films in circulation with half of the films being video productions and 86 per cent lasting less than an hour.

¹⁰ According to the CNC (*avance sur recettes* and *fond documentaire*), no official documents instructing the *avance* to help *beur* cinema have been made public so far, which does not exclude that such documents exist.

¹¹ The state also contributed indirectly to films produced by associations through the *Fonds d'Action Sociale* (FAS), but here again there was no straightforward link between the public allocation and the film production (Khellil 1991, 107-29).

¹² Medhi Charef with *Au pays des Juliets* (1991), *Marie-Line* (1999), *La Fille de Keltoum* (2001), Rachid Bouchareb with *Cheb* (1990), *Poussière de vie* (1994), *Little Senegal* (2000) and Merzak Allouache with *Bab el Oued City* (1994), *L'Autre monde* (2000) and his recent popular success *Chouchou* (2002).

¹³ Almost as many films as the three other channels altogether (Baudelot 1986, 11).

¹⁴ Associated British Picture Corporation Ltd (ABPC) was acquired by Electrical and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI) in 1969 which was then bought in 1979 by Thorn Electrical Industries Ltd to form the Thorn-Emi group.

¹⁵ 1896 saw the creation of Pathé Frères and Gaumont. In 1970 they became Gaumont-Pathé and in 1980 they owned 600 screens.

¹⁶ This trend was mainly caused by the arrival of screen multiplex, the influence of the British Film Year (see film culture later in this chapter) and the success of big American block-busters (*Ghostbuster*, *Gremlins*, *Rambo*, *Police Academy 2*) in Britain.

¹⁷ French cinema was then moved under the supervision of the Culture ministry in 1959.

¹⁸ *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (mars 1982, 252), *Moonlighting* (octobre 1982, 260), 1984 (décembre 1984, 286), *Brazil* (mars 1985, 289), *A Passage to India* (mai 1985, 291), *The Emerald Forest* (juillet/août 1985, 293/294), *Z.O.O.* (avril 1986, 302), *Hope and Glory* (novembre 1987) and *A Fish called Wanda* (février 1989, 336).

¹⁹ During the 1980s, the Cannes Film Festival was successively headed by Kirk Douglas (1980), Jacques Deray (1981), Giorgio Strehler (1982), William Styron (1983), Dirk Bogarde (1984), Milos Forman (1985), Sydney Pollack (1986), Yves Montand (1987), Ettore Scola (1988) and Wim Wenders (1989).

²⁰ In addition to this initiative, Jack Lang celebrated the film industry by events such as a film screening outside the Centre Pompidou, the official recognition of national and international stars and the successful exhibition of 'Cité-ciné' during the winter of 1987-88 at the Grande Halle de la Villette (Paris) which 'symbolised a peak of cultural and entertaining popularisation of cinema' (Frodon 1995, 630).

²¹ Namely *Business As Usual*, *Empire State*, *Eat the Rich*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *The Last of England* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*.

²² In addition to these films, *Côté cœur, côté jardin* (Bertrand Van Effenterre, 1984) presents two step sisters, aged 20 and 35, and their experiences and disillusion towards the coming in power of the Socialist Party. Unfortunately, I have not been able to watch a copy of this film.

- ²³ Beside this central corpus of films, *Diamond Skulls* (Nick Broomfield, 1989) can be mentioned as referring to the monarchy and *Scandal* (Michael Caton-Jones, 1989) dealt with the notorious 1963 Profumo affair.
- ²⁴ For instance *Z* (Costa Gavras, 1969) starts with a warning to the public that any resemblance with real events is not a coincidence but voluntary.
- ²⁵ The script of *Le Bon plaisir* is directly inspired by Giroud's book *La Comédie du pouvoir*. The fact that this book was published by Editions Mazarine, the name of Mitterrand's natural daughter, triggered the questioning of the press and the need for Giroud to deny any possible link between her fiction and reality in the 1990s.
- ²⁶ Thirard (1985, 72) notes that 'the release of the film when everyone was talking about the sabotage of the *Rainbow Warrior* by the French secret services, about a 'political lie', is the sort of coincidence that can happen sometimes'.
- ²⁷ Karl Francis made films for television, David Drury worked on documentary and television drama, Richard Eyre and Ian Mc Ewan made a film for television together, Françoise Giroud was a journalist, Jacques Fansten worked for television and Serge Leroy was a former journalist.
- ²⁸ Even if the Secretary of State for Education has a long term friendship with an influent journalist (Philippe Leotard).
- ²⁹ To this list could be added *Vanille Fraise* (Gérard Oury, 1989), a spoof about the *Rainbow Warrior* incident.
- ³⁰ *Argie* (Jorge Blanco, 1985) also refers to the Falkland war through the experience of an Argentinean in London during the war.
- ³¹ Although public spending gradually increased in Britain both in Education and the National Health Service, it was in decline in relation to the proportion of the National Gross Product (Marwick 1996, 356-7). The intention of the Conservative Government since 1979 was to reduce public expenditure in education (Abercrombie and Warde eds. 1988, 337-44) and to enhance the differentiation within the comprehensive education by offering the schools the possibility of the greater economic freedom (for those which could afford it) through opting out. It also introduced more control over teachers in terms of results and efficiency (Simon 1988, 69-80). As regards to the NHS, the report on *Inequality in Health* (known as the Black Report after the name of its chairman, Sir Douglas Black) which appeared in 1980 stated the difficulties of Britain's health service, especially for the deprived citizens. A dominant feature of this decade was the inroads made by the private sector in the NHS structure, together with encouraging more people to take out private health insurance (Abercrombie and Warde eds. 1988, 393-4).
- ³² In fact, instead of referring to the situation of education in the 1980s, it looks as if directors chose to depict the academic world through Heritage Films like *Chariots of Fire* and *Maurice*.
- ³³ There is also the *Carry On* films like *Carry On Teacher* (1959), *Carry On Nurse* (1959) and *Carry On Doctor* (1968) all directed by Gerald Thomas.
- ³⁴ Lindsay Anderson explains that 'Unfortunately, audiences, particularly English audiences, want to be amused and not disturbed' (Hacker and Price 1991, 48).
- ³⁵ As noted by Finch (1987, 147), London's docklands is also used in TV series such as *Prospects*, *Widows* and *The Sweeney*.
- ³⁶ The release of Pialat's *Loulou* (1979) already triggered a lot of journalistic questioning concerning the possible anti-Semitism of its director (Bonitzer 1980, 46).
- ³⁷ In an interview with *Télérama*, Depardieu (Carrère 1985) explains 'I decided to play the role of the perfect cop: a cop with human weakness is more interesting than a cop with social weakness'.
- ³⁸ Julien Duvivier (1936).
- ³⁹ Mike Leigh relates that on a couple of occasions during the projection of *Meantime* (1983) some Far Left people walked out of the theatre while blaming the film for being "bourgeois, fascist, reactionary" (Gore-Langton 2000, 11).
- ⁴⁰ Debate following the screening of *Pierre et Djemila* on 11th September 2002 at the Forum des Images (Paris).
- ⁴¹ Debate following the screening of *De bruit et de fureur* on 30th October 2002 at the Forum des Images (Paris).
- ⁴² In her following film *La Crise* (1992), Coline Serreau uses a similar device with Victor (Vincent Lindon) whose period of unemployment made him realise the importance of his personal life over his professional one.
- ⁴³ During an informal discussion with Mike Leigh (Forum des Images, 2nd November 2002), I referred to the pessimism of *Meantime* and the fact that on one level the situation of the two sons remains hopeless and on another level it seems that nothing can be done against unemployment in 1980s Britain. Leigh's answer was that he does not consider *Meantime* as a film about unemployment and therefore the unresolved economic situation is not so important. Since he considers this film as the inner journey of the two sons, he believes that the ending is very positive since Mark and Colin are ready to leave home and have become independent.
- ⁴⁴ Ken Loach's absence from fiction production after *Looks and Smiles* (1981) was frequently questioned by film critics. In a time of harsh industrial dispute, one could have expected Ken Loach to add his contribution to the representation of industrial strikes on the big screen. But the British director considered that, in that state of emergency, documentaries would contribute more efficiently in supporting the workers since 'the idea of making

a feature film which took three years to finance and another year to come out and then got shown in an art house to ten people and a dog just seemed a crazy thing for me to be doing' (Fuller 1998, 64). Thus, Loach made *Questions of Leadership*⁴⁴ (1983), a four-part documentary on trade union leadership commissioned by Channel Four but censored by the Independent Broadcasting Authority, and *Which side are you on?* (1984) which is an anthology of miners' songs and poems.

⁴⁵ The film is based on a true incident which took place in a cloth factory in Liverpool (Norman 1987, 12).

⁴⁶ The now cult feature *Withnail and I* (Bruce Robinson, 1987) is about two unemployed actors, performed by Richard E. Grant and Paul McGann, who decide to leave the squalor of their London flat for a week-end in the countryside. But since *Withnail and I* is set in the 1960s, this major contribution to the representation of the artist will not be included in this study which only focuses on representation of 1980s Britain.

⁴⁷ The performance of Hazel O'Connor for the film soundtrack proves successful in the British charts with a peak at number 5 and a 37 weeks presence (for more detail see Donnelly 2001, 110).

⁴⁸ Eric Rochant said about *Un monde sans pitié* that 'The New Wave is an obvious reference which I do not reject since I was fed on this cinema' (Amiel and Ramasse 1989, 34).

⁴⁹ With Michel Simon in the eponymous role, *Boudu sauvé des eaux* depicts the conflict between a middle-class Parisian family and a tramp who, after enjoying the comfort of their life, rejects it and leaves with the river in the same way he had arrived. M. Hulot in *Mon oncle* demonstrates that freedom can only be achieved by remaining away from materialistic preoccupations. As for Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud), he does not have any family ties and moves from one occasional job to the next. Like Hippo, his financial situation does not worry him (he is often invited to stay for dinner) and they share a certain dandyism when walking in the streets of Paris.

⁵⁰ This commonly found definition proves problematic in film representation as these minorities are not given the same treatment on the screen. Therefore, it is necessary for this particular study to make a difference between the Asian and the Black (from African and Caribbean origin) communities.

⁵¹ See the documentary *Mémoires d'immigrés* made by Yasmina Benguigui (1997).

⁵² For practical reasons, immigrant communities in French cinema will be identified as *beur* or black due to the difference in their representation.

⁵³ In the case of a middle-aged Caribbean woman like Juliette it must be added, as Mireille Rosello (1998) explains, that Caribbean immigrants did not have the same status as other immigrants shortly after 1946 when Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyana became French departments.

⁵⁴ There were also French films referring to the issue of racism among the youths, such as *Pierre et Djemila* (Gérard Blain, 1986) and *Les Innocents* (André Téchiné, 1987), but these films were not linked with the idea of unemployment as it was the case in British films.

⁵⁵ On that specific issue, Salewicz (1984, 155-61) has written a detailed article based on interviews carried in London in the 1980s.

⁵⁶ See Hacker and Price (1991, 158) and Kureishi (1986, 43).

⁵⁷ Geoff Eley (1994, 17-43) provides a detailed study of the representation of family life and the image of the working class based more specifically on *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.

⁵⁸ According to Bourdieu (1979, 85-6), 'a sort of congenital coarseness [is] the pretext for a class racism which associated the populace with everything heavy, thick and fat'.

⁵⁹ 'gauche caviar' is a deprecating term referring to middle class socialists (the English equivalent is probably 'Champagne Socialists').

⁶⁰ Pascal Thomas has directed *Le Chaud lapin* (1974), *Pleure pas la bouche pleine* (1973) and *La Dilettante* (1999).

Mike Leigh's films include *Meantime* (1983), *High Hopes* (1988), *Life is Sweet* (1990) and *Secrets and Lies* (1996).

⁶¹ And Françoise Audé (1986, 73) states that 'Promoted by a trailer referring to *Trois hommes et un couffin*, *Le Complexe du kangourou* did not benefit from the popularity of Coline Serreau's comedy' while Siclier (1986) warns the audience 'Despite the presence of Roland Giraud and the kid, the themes of the successful *Trois hommes et un couffin* have not been used again'.

⁶² Here the role reversal can be compared with the utopian situation of Fernand (Samy Frey) in *Pourquoi Pas!* (Serreau, 1977) who thoroughly enjoys staying at home while his girlfriend is the bread-earner.

⁶³ This question taken from *A Fish called Wanda* served as the last sentence of Stephen Frears's documentary *Typically British* (1995) on his conception of British cinema (Guérin 1995, 98-102).

⁶⁴ In 1985 Serreau has already directed *Mais qu'est-ce qu'elles veulent?* (1975), *Pourquoi pas!* (1977) and *Qu'est-ce qu'on attend pour être heureux?* (1982).

⁶⁵ Shortly after the success of *Trois hommes et un couffin* an American remake directed by Serreau herself was planned but was ultimately shot by a completely American cast.

⁶⁶ Charles Crichton directed twelve Ealing comedies including *Hue and Cry* (1947), *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951) and *The Titfield Thunderbolt* (1953).

⁶⁷Concerning the political context, Serreau's grasp of contemporary issues was often underlined:

'Here Coline Serreau exploits and, more disturbingly, reinforces the resurgence of natalist propaganda for which France is famous' (Forbes 1987, 170).

'This film is perfect to justify the natalist policy of some politicians' (Schidlow 1985).

⁶⁸Referring to 80s Heritage films, Jeffrey Richards (1997, 169) also notes that 'Restrain is invariably depicted in these films as a recipe for personal unhappiness and something that should be rejected in favour of personal, usually sexual fulfilment'.

⁶⁹As a reminder, a similar situation is found in *Les Maris, les femmes, les amants* (Pascal Thomas, 1988) where men establish a privileged relationship with their children by leaving their wives in Paris. Here the symbolic role of the island (the film takes place on l'île de Ré) reinforces the separation between women left on the continent and men and children living together.

⁷⁰In *La Boum 2*, the caricatured ugly teenager Stephane is constantly turned into a ridiculous character by being stood up and ignored by the rest of the class, as his ugliness makes him abnormal.

⁷¹In French a woman dedicated to her household is referred to as 'pot-au-feu'.

Appendices

Appendix one: Source of funding of the British films referred to in the thesis

Title	Year	NFFC/British Screen	BFI Production Board	Channel Four/ Film Four International	Others
<i>Babylon</i>	1980	NFFC			Diversity Music
<i>Betrayal</i>	1982				Horizon Pictures
<i>My Beautiful Laundrette</i>	1985			Channel Four	Working Title
<i>Blood Red Roses</i>	1986			Channel Four	Freeway Films/Lorimar
<i>Breaking Glass</i>	1980				Allied Stars
<i>Britannia Hospital</i>	1982	NFFC			Film and General/EMI
<i>Burning an Illusion</i>	1981		BFI		
<i>Business as Usual</i>	1987			Film Four	London Cannon Films
<i>The Chain</i>	1984			Film Four International	Quintet Productions/County Bank
<i>Clockwise</i>	1985				Moment Films/Thorn EMI
<i>Defence of the Realm</i>	1985	NFFC			Enigma Films/Rank
<i>Eat the Rich</i>	1987				Rio Films
<i>Educating Rita</i>	1983				Acorn Pictures
<i>A Fish called Wanda</i>	1988				Prominent Features/MGM
<i>Fords on Water</i>	1983		BFI	Channel Four	
<i>Giro City</i>	1982			Channel Four	Silvarealm
<i>The Good Father</i>	1986			Film Four International	Greenpoint Films
<i>Gregory's Girl</i>	1980	NFFC			Scottish Television/Lake Film Productions
<i>Heavenly Pursuit</i>	1986	NFFC		Film Four International	Skreba
<i>High Hopes</i>	1988	British Screen		Film Four International	Portman Production
<i>A Letter to Brezhnev</i>	1985			Film Four International	Palace productions
<i>The Long Good Friday</i>	1980				Handmade Films/Black Lion Films

Title	Year	NFFC/British Screen	BFI Production Board	Channel Four/ Film Four International	Others
<i>Looks and Smiles</i>	1981				Black Lion/Kestrel Films/Central Television
<i>Made in Britain</i>	1983				Central Television
<i>Meantime</i>					Central Television
<i>Mona Lisa</i>	1986				Handmade Films/Palace
<i>The Nature of the Beast</i>	1988	British Screen		Film Four International	Rosso Productions
<i>Paris by Night</i>	1988	British Screen		Film Four International	A Greenpoint production/Cineplex/Odeon Films
<i>Party Party</i>	1983				Film and General Productions/A&M Sound Pictures
<i>Playing Away</i>	1986			Film Four International	An Insight Film
<i>The Ploughman's Lunch</i>	1983				Greenpoint Films/Goldcrest
<i>Rita, Sue and Bob Too</i>	1986	British Screen		Film Four International	Umbrella Entertainment Production
<i>Runners</i>	1983				Hanstoll Enterprise/Goldcrest
<i>Sammy and Rosie Get Laid</i>	1988			Film Four International	Cinecom
<i>She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjamas</i>	1984			Film Four International	Pink Pyjama Productions
<i>Shirley Valentine</i>	1989				Paramount
<i>Steaming</i>	1984				World Film Services
<i>Strapless</i>	1988			Film Four International	Granada Films
<i>Vroom</i>	1988	British Screen		Film Four International	Motion Pictures
<i>Wetherby</i>	1985			Film Four International	Zenith/Greenpoint Films

Appendix two: Films which benefited from the *avance sur recettes* in the 1980s

1980 (CNC Infos 1981, 6)

[Directors' names were not made available for this year only]

L'Amour trop fort

A perte de vue

Asphalte

Un assassin qui passe

Les Aventures de Holly and Wood

Du blues dans la tête

Cauchemar

La Chanson du mal-aimé

Le Cheval d'orgueil

Le Cirque

Clara et les chics types

Le Diable dans la tête

Exterieur nuit

La Femme enfant

La Flambeuse

Haute surveillance

L'Homme fragile

Le Jardinier

Le Jeu de la comtesse Dolingen de Gratz

Jules

Malevil

Paco l'infailible

La Petite sirène

Quarante quatre ou les récits de la nuit

Les Quarantièmes rugissants

Quartet

Les Riaux

Le Roi des cons

Une sale affaire

Le Sang de l'Acoma

La Traversée de la pacific

La Voie sauvage

Apparence féminine

La Bourgeoise et le loubard

La Fuite en avant

Naussac la vie engloutie

Le Risque de vivre

Le Vieil Anai

1981 (CNC Infos 1982, 5)

Les Années ont passé (Jean-Jacques Aublanc)

Cargo (Serge Dubor)

Le Cinéma de papa (Maud Linder)

Coup de torchon (Bertrand Tavernier)

Crime d'amour (Guy Gilles)

Le Désert d'images (Jean-François Laguionie)

Les Espadrilles qui prennent l'eau (José Pinheiro)

Il faut tuer Birgitt Hass (Laurent Heynemann)

Les Iles (Iradj Azimi)

L'Invitation au voyage (Peter Del Monte)

Itinéraire Bis (Christian Drillaud)

Les Jocondes (Jean-Daniel Pillaud)

M'as-tu vu en cadavre, Nestor Burma détective de choc (Jean-Luc Miesch)

Neige (Juliet Berto)

Nous étions tous des noms d'arbres (Armand Gatti)

La Guérilla (Pierre Kast)

L'Ombre de la terre (Taïeb Louhchi)

L'Ombre rouge (Jean-Louis Comolli)
Passion (Jean-Luc Godard)
Le Petit Joseph (Jean-Michel Barjol)
Le Point de fuite (Bernard Gauthier)
Le Retour de Martin Guerre (Daniel Vigne)
La Belle vie (Jean-Pierre Gallepe)
Le Chant des fans (Georges Luneau)
Guerre des femmes (Gérard Guérin)
Salsa pour Goldman (Frank Cassenti)
La Vraie histoire de Gérard le chomeur (Joaquin Lledo)

1982 (CNC Infos 1983, 8)

L'Araignée de satin (Jacques Baratier)
L'Argent (Robert Bresson)
Les Bancals (Hervé Lièvre)
Le Batard (Bertrand van Effenterre)
La Belle captive (Alain Robbe-Grillet)
Le Boulanger de Bonifacio (Pomme Meffre)
Les Boulugres (Jean Hurtado)
Un Bruit qui court (Jean Pierre Sentier and Daniel Laloux)
Une chambre en ville (Jacques Demy)
Clémentine Tango (Caroline Roboh)
La Cote d'amour (Charlotte Dubreuil)
Le Destin de Juliette (Aline Isserman)
Farrebique... 35 ans après (George Rouquier)
La Femme ivoire (Dominique Cheminal)
Le Général de l'armée morte (Luciano Tovoli)
En haut des marches (Paul Vecchiali)
Hécate (Daniel Schmid)
L'Homme blessé (Patrice Chéreau)
Import-export (Romain Goupil)
L'Indiscrétion (Pierre Lary)
Interdit aux moins de treize ans (Jean-Louis Bertucelli)
Un jeu brutal (Jean-Claude Brisseau)
Le Jeune marié (Bernard Stora)
Lettres d'amour en Somalie (Frédéric Mitterrand)
Liberty belle (Pascal Kane)
Mourir à trente ans (Romain Goupil)
La Nuit ensoleillée (Patrick Ségal)
L'Oiseau de Madame Blomer (David Delrieux)
L'Orsalher, le montreur d'ours (Jean Fléchet)
La Palombière (Jean-Pierre Denis)
Paradis pour tous (Alain Jessua)
La Passe d'Annibal (Bernard Favre)
La Passion lumière (Jean Marboeuf)
Pauline à la plage (Eric Rohmer)
Pieds-nus dans les étoiles (Laszlo Szabo)
Le Préféré (Marc-André Grynbaum)
Prends 10 000 balles et casse-toi (Mahmoud Zemmouri)
Les Princes (Tony Gatlif)
Le Prof de gym' (Philippe Valois)
Querelle (Rainer Werner Fassbinder)
Qu'est-ce-qu'on attend pour être heureux! (Coline Serreau)
Rue Cases-nègres (Euzhan Palcy)
Les Sacrifiés (Okacha Touita)
Le Sang des tropiques (Christian Bricout)
Sarah (Maurice Dugowson)
Si j'avais mille ans (Monique Enckell)
Stella (Laurent Heynemann)
La Vie est un roman (Alain Resnais)

Le Voleur de feuilles (Pierre Timbaud)

1983 (CNC Infos 1984, 8-9)

La Guerre des demoiselles (Jacques Nichet)

Rebelote (Jacques Richard)

La Bête noire (Patrick Chaput)

Tricheurs (Barbet Schroeder)

Vive la sociale (Gérard Mordillat)

La Scarlatine (Gabriel Aghion)

Poussière d'empire (Lam Le)

L'Enfant secret (Philippe Garrel)

En raison des circonstances (Saad Salman)

Flash-back (Olivier Nolin)

L'Enfant trouvé (Jean-Pierre Dougnac)

Contes clandestins (Dominique Crèvecoeur)

Un homme à ma taille (Annette Carducci)

Laisse béton (Serge Le Péron)

Le Voyage (Michel Andrieu)

Boy meets girl (Léos Carax)

La Fuite à l'anglaise (Jean Sagols)

L'Amour par terre (Jacques Rivette)

Ubac (Jean-Pierre Grasset)

Le Chien (Jean-François Gallotte)

Le Cercle des passions (Claude d'Anna)

Rue Barbare (Gilles Behat)

Le Thé à la menthe (Bahloul Bahloul)

Cap canaille (Jean-Henri Roger, Juliet Berto)

Une pierre dans la bouche (Jean-Louis Leconte)

L'Amour fugitif (Pascal Ortega)

Le Dernier combat (Luc Besson)

La Diagonale du fou (Richard Dembo)

Un homme à l'envers, un homme à l'endroit (Madeleine Laik)

Rouge-midi (Robert Guediguian)

L'Arbre sous la mer (Philippe Muyl)

Quartiers d'hiver (Peter Lilienthal)

Tango (Stéphane Kurc)

Histoire du caporal (Jean Baronnet)

L'Addition (Denis Amar)

Un amour de Swann (Volker Schlöndorff)

Stakhanova (Irène Jouannet)

Lettres d'amour perdues (Robert Salis)

La Ville des pirates (Raul Ruiz)

Rouge-gorge (Pierre Zucca)

Les Favoris de la lune (Otar Iosseliani)

Polar (Jacques Bral)

1984 (CNC Infos 1985, 9)

Le Bal (Ettore Scola)

A nos amours (Maurice Pialat)

Illustres inconnus (Stanislas Stanojevic)

L'Intruse (Bruno Gatillon)

La Pirate (Jacques Doillon)

Envols et entraves (Helma Sanders-Brahms)

Le Soldat qui dort (Jean-Louis Benoit)

Le Meilleur de la vie (Renaud Victor)

L'Amour à mort (Alain Resnais)

Avé Maria (Jacques Richard)

Dionysos (Jean Rouch)

Les Baliseurs du désert (Nacer Khemir)

Le Matelot 512 (René Allio)

Au nom de Komba (Raymond Adam)
L'Enfant des étoiles (Mohamed Benayat)
Vertiges (Christine Laurent)
Les Détraquées (Jacques Baratier)
Louise l'insoumise (Charlotte Silvera)
Train d'enfer (Roger Hanin)
Le Buffle noir (Laszlo Szabo)
Souvenirs souvenirs (Ariel Zeitoun)
Subway (Luc Besson)
L'Intrus (Irène Jouannet)
Paris vu par... 20 ans après (Akerman, Garrel, Dubois, Venault, Mitterrand, Nordon)
Blanche et Marie (Jacques Renard)
Les Enragés (Pierre-Williams Glenn)
Escalier C (Jean-Charles Tacchela)
Le Temps d'un instant (Pierre Jallaud)
Americonga (helvio Soto)
Tristesse et beauté (Joy Fleury)
Liste noire (Alain Bonnot)
Gazl el banat (Jocelyn Saab)
Notre mariage (Valéria Sarmiento)
Double messieurs (Jean-François Stevenin)
Le Thé au harem (Medhi Charef)
Point de fuite (Raoul Ruiz)
Les Trottoirs de Saturne (Hugo Santiago)
L'Enfant invisible (André Lindon)
Vaudeville (Jean Marboeuf)
Opéra des ombres (George Combe)
Tangos l'exil de gardel (Fernando E. Solanas)
Tendre belvédère (Didier Haudepin)

1985 (CNC Infos 1986a, 9)
Rouge baiser (Véra Belmont)
La Chair à vif (Patrice Gautier)
Le Baiser perché (Patrick Lambert)
Alexina (René Feret)
Lune de miel (Patrick Jamain)
Le Voyage à Paimpol (John Berry)
Baton Rouge (Rachid Bouchareb)
Sirène (Sergio Castilla)
Orang-outan (Gérard Vienne)
Exit-exil (Luc Monheim)
Trois hommes et un couffin (Coline Serreau)
Hurlevent (Jacques Rivette)
La Tentation d'Isabelle (Jacques Doillon)
Maine Océan (Jacques Rozier)
Partenaires (Claude d'Anna)
Jean de Florette (Claude Berri)
Manon des sources (Claude Berri)
Ni avec toi ni sans toi (Alan Maline)
Empty quarter (Raymond Depardon)
L'Unique (Jérôme Diamant-Berger)
L'Île au trésor (Raul Ruiz)
Passage secret (Laurent Perrin)
L'Effrontée (Claude Miller)
Gardien de la nuit (Jean-Pierre Limosin)
Le Havre (Juliet Berto)
Accord parfait (Arsène Floquet)
Loin des yeux (Bruno Bayen)
L'Homme qui n'était pas là (René Féret)
High speed (Michel Kaptur, Monique Dartonne)

Rosa la rose, fille publique (Paul Vecchiali)
Le Lien de parenté (Willy Rameau)
Golden eighties (Chantal Akerman)
La Photo (Nico Papatakis)
37°2 Le matin (Jean-Jacques Beneix)
Le Bonheur a encore frappé (Jean-Luc Trotignon)
Flagrant désir (Claude Faraldo)
Dans le désordre (Jean-Bernard Menoud)
La Presqu'île (Gérard Luneau)
Mon beau-frère a tué ma sœur (Jacques Rouffio)
Les Gobes-lunes (Jean Schmidt)
Le Crime (André Téchiné)
L'Amant magnifique (Aline Isserman)
Dernière chanson (Dennis Berry)
Elle a passé tant d'heures sous les sunlights (Philippe Garrel)
I love you (Marco Ferreri)
L'Affaire des divisions Morituri (Jacques Ossang)
Thérèse (Alain Chevalier)
Faubourg Saint-Martin (Jean-Claude Guiguet)
Le Testament d'un poète juif assassiné (Frank Cassenti)
Sans toit ni loi (Agnès Varda)
Melo (Alain Resnais)
Sauve-toi Lola (Michel Drach)
Black Mic Mac (Thomas Gilou)
831, Voyage incertain (Jean-Louis Lignerat)
Robinson & Cie (Jacques Colombat)

1986 (CNC Infos 1987, 10)
Corps et biens (Benoît Jacquot)
Trop tard Balhazar (Philippe Lopes-Curval)
Mauvais sang (Léos Carax)
Soleil de plomb (Bernard Dubois)
Résidence surveillée (Frédéric Compain)
Beau temps mais orageux en fin de journée (Gérard Frot-Coutaz)
La Mort d'Empedocles (Jean-Marie Straub)
La Femme de ma vie (Régis Warnier)
La Puritaine (Jacques Doillon)
Le Paltoquet (Michel Deville)
Strictement personnel (Pierre Jolivet)
Désordre (Olivier Assayas)
No woman's land (Mehdi Charef)
Mon cas (Manoel de Oliveira)
La Queue du diable (Giorgio Treves)
A l'ombre de la canaille bleue (Pierre Clémenti)
Mort un dimanche de pluie (Joël Santoni)
Eden miseria (Christine Laurent)
Terminus (Pierre-Williams Glenn)
Noces en Galilée (Michel Khleifi)
Noir et blanc (Claire Devers)
High speed (M. Kaptur)
Pierre et Djemila (Gérard Blain)
De bruit et de fureur (Jean-Claude Brisseau)
Les Hommes-machines contre Gandahar (René Laloux)
Jeux d'artifices (Virginie Thévenet)
Grand Guignol (Jean Marboeuf)
Fuegos (Alfredo Arias)
Le Rescapé (Okacha Touita)
Love in bloom (René Gilson)
Ravi (Vincent Lombard)
Buisson ardent (Laurent Perrin)

Les Montagnes de la lune (Paulo Rocha)
Le Moine et la sorcière (Suzanne Schiffman)
Champ d'honneur (Jean-Pierre Denis)
Le Jupon rouge (Johanna Lefèvre)
Nuit docile (Guy Gilles)
Accroche cœur (Chantal Picault)
L'Été en pente douce (Gérard Krawczyk)
Sous le soleil de Satan (Maurice Pialat)
Les Mendiants (Benoît Jacquot)
Un amour à Paris (Merzak Allouache)
Chateauroux district (Philippe Charigot)
Candy Mountain (R. Franck, R. Wurlitzer)
Où que tu sois (Alain Bergala)
Avril brisé (Liria Begeja)
Mood indigo (Radovan Tadic)
La Petite allumeuse (Daniel Dubroux)
Rue du départ (Tony Gatlif)
Simple Simon (Patrick Grandperret)
Poker (Catherine Corsini)
Mercenaire (Maroun Bagdadi)

1987 (CNC Infos 1988a, 10)

Alouette je te plumerai (Pierre Zucca)
Au revoir les enfants (Louis Malle)
Blanc de Chine (Denys Granier-Deferre)
Caftan d'amour constelle de passion (Moumen Smihi)
Charlie Dingo (Gilles Behat)
Chocolat (Claire Denis)
Corentin (Jean Marboeuf)
Cran d'arrêt (Mohamed Benayat)
De sable et de sang (Jeanne Labrune)
Deux femmes (Bernard Cohn)
Duo solo (Jean-Pierre Delattre)
Fonds secrets (Emilio Pacull)
Fréquence meurtre (Elisabeth Rappeneau)
Impressions de l'île des morts (Richard Leacock)
La Bande des quatre (Jacques Rivette)
La Comédie du travail (Luc Moullet)
La Lumière du lac (Francesca Comencini)
La Novice (Arielle Dombasle)
La Nuit de l'océan (Antoine Perset)
La Passion Béatrice (Bertrand Tavernier)
La Table tournante (Paul Grimault)
L'Autre nuit (Jean-Pierre Limosin)
La Vallée fantôme (Alain Tanner)
La Vie platinée (Claude Cadiou)
La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille (Etienne Chatiliez)
L'Emploi du temps (Jean-Daniel Pollet)
Le Radeau de la méduse (Iradj Azimi)
Les Années sandwiches (Pierre Boutron)
Les Innocents (André Téchiné)
Les Possédés (Andrzej Wajda)
Les Tribulations de Balthazar Kober (Wojcieh J. Has)
L'Heure de la sensation vraie (Didier Goldschmidt)
L'Île aux oiseaux (Geoffroy Larcher)
L'Oeuvre au noir (André Delvaux)
Maladie d'amour (Jacques Deray)
Milan noir (Ronald Chammah)
Mon bel amour, ma déchirure (José Pinheiro)
Mon cher sujet (Anne-Marie Mieville)

Qui trop embrasse (Jacques Davila)
Saxo (Ariel Zeitoun)
Section halte (Gérard Mordillat)
Tango-Rock anyway (Olivier Lorsac)
36 Fillette (Catherine Breillat)
Un Jour dehors (Renaud Victor)
Vent de panique (Bernard Stora)

1988 (CNC Infos 1989, 14)

La Nuit Bengali (Nicolas Klotz)
Soigne ta droite (Jean-Luc Godard)
Il y a maldonne (John Berry)
Jaune révoluer (Olivier Langlois)
Le Complot (Agnieszka Holland)
Once more (Paul Vecchiali)
Jane B. par Agnès V. (Agnès Varda)
La Maison de Jeanne (Magali Clément)
La Case du blanc (Philippe Venault)
Drôle d'endroit pour une rencontre (François Dupeyron)
Après la pluie (Camille de Casabianca)
Peaux de vaches (Patricia Mazuy)
Ada dans la jungle (Gérard Zingg)
L'Ane qui a bu la lune (Marie-Claude Treilhou)
Trois places pour le 26 (Jacques Demy)
La Petite voleuse (Claude Miller)
Baxter (Jérôme Boivin)
Les Deux Fragonard (Philippe Le Guay)
Yaaba (Idrissa Ouedraogo)
Marquis (Henry Xhonneux)
La Soule (Michel Sibra)
Thank you Satan (André Farwagi)
La Salle de bains (John Lvoff)
La Vouivre (Georges Wilson)
Baptême (René Feret)
Je suis le seigneur du châteaux (Régis Wargnier)
La Rouge (Louis GrosPierre)
Corps perdu (Eduardo de Gregorio)
Erreur de jeunesse (Radovan Tadic)
Bunker Palace Hotel (Enki Bilal)
Prisonnières (Charlotte Silvera)
La Fille du magicien (Claudine Bories)
Zanzibar (Christine Pascal)
Je veux rentrer à la maison (Alain Resnais)
Sud (Fernando Solanas)
Les Amants du Pont-Neuf (Léos Carax)
L'Enfant de l'hiver (Olivier Assayas)
Tolérance (Pierre-Henri Salfati)
Tabataba (Raymond Rajaonarivelo)
Chimères (Claire Devers)
L'Annonce faite à Marie (Alain Cuny)
L'Otage de l'Europe (Jerry Kawaleronicz)
Force majeure (Pierre Jolivet)
Chasse gardée (Jean-Claude Biette)
Guerriers et captives (Edgar Cozarinsky)
Chine ma douleur (Sijie Dai)
Les Surprises de l'amour (Caroline Chomienne)
Manika (François Villiers)
L'Incident clos (Jean-Pierre Thorn)
Les Baisers de secours (Philippe Garel)
La Vie et rien d'autre (Bertrand Tavernier)

Le Lion est un chat (Otar Iosseliani)
Le Feu sacré (Yannick Bellon)
L'Union sacrée (Alexandre Arcady)
L'Homme qui voulait savoir (George Sluizer)
Monsieur Hire (Patrice Leconte)
Nocturne indien (Alain Corneau)
L'Ombre du fou (Pascal Baeumler)

1989 (CNC Infos 1990, 14)

First or second film:

Quelque part vers Conakry (Françoise Ebrard)
L'Amour (Philippe Faucon)
Nord (Xavier Beauvois)
Douga (Cheik Doukouré)
Halfaouine (Férid Boughedir)
L'Autre (Bernard Giraudeau)
Pentimento (Tonie Marshall)
Les Derniers jours d'Emmanuel Kant (Denis Lenoir)
Un Type bien (Laurent Bénégui)
Le Centaure (J-L Philippon)
Vent contraire (Xavier Castano)
Juste avant l'orage (Bruno Herbulot)
La Discrète (Christian Vincent)
L'Etoile du Cheri (Gilles Mimouni)
Villa mauresque (Patrick Mimouni)
La Sentinelle (Arnaud Desplechin)
Les Années campagne (Philippe Leriche)
La Grande comédie des petits sentiments (Cédric Kahn)
Toubab Bi (Moussa Touré)
Vincennes Neuilly (Pierre Dupouey)
L'Etoile filante (Isabel Sebastian)
Rien que des mensonges (Paule Muret)

Established film-makers:

Maman (Romain Goupil)
Le Retour de Casanova (Edouard Niermans)
Cyrano de Bergerac (Jean-Paul Rappeneau)
Conversation...après un enterrement (Michel Drach)
Rendez-vous au tas de sable (Didier Grousset)
La Conception de Julien (Danièle Dubroux)
Le Bal des puces (Serge Meynard)
Kobi des tamponneuses (Jacques Demy)
L'Oreille cassée (Gabriel Aghion)
Amelia Lopes O'Neill (Valeria Sarmiento)
La Gloire de mon père (Yves Robert)
Le Château de ma mère (Yves Robert)
Nuit et jour (Chantal Akerman)
La Désenchantée (Benoît Jacquot)
La Baule les Pins (Diane Kurys)
Van Gogh (Maurice Pialat)
Nouvelle vague (Jean-Luc Godard)
Le Coup suprême (Jean-Pierre Sentier)
Friday (Pierre Zucca)
Mortels (Claire Denis)
Le Jour des rois (Marie-Claude Treilhou)
Jean Galmot, aventurier (Alain Maline)
Sirga (Patrick Grandperret)
Le Rouge du couchant (Jean-Claude Guiguet)
Le Mari de la coiffeuse (Patrick Leconte)
Nuit d'hiver en ville (Michel Deville)

Sam suffit (Virginie Thévenet)
Quinto (Nico Papatakis)
Sushi express (Laurent Perrin)

Appendix three: Top Twenty box-office results

1980

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>The Empire Strikes Back</i> (USA)	<i>Kramer contre Kramer</i> (USA)
2	<i>Kramer vs Kramer</i> (USA)	<i>Les Sous-doués</i> (F)
3	<i>Star Trek-The Motion Picture</i> (USA)	<i>Le Guignolo</i> (F)
4	<i>Monty Python's Life of Brian</i> (UK)	<i>L'Avare</i> (F)
5	<i>Airplane!</i> (USA)	<i>Les 101 dalmatiens</i> (USA)
6	<i>10</i> (USA)	<i>L'Empire contre attaque</i> (USA)
7	<i>Escape from Alcatraz</i> (USA)	<i>La Banquière</i> (F)
8	<i>The Black Hole</i> (USA)	<i>Le Coup de parapluie</i> (F)
9	<i>The Shining</i> (USA)	<i>Le Dernier métro</i> (F)
10	<i>Apocalypse Now</i> (USA)	<i>C'est pas moi c'est lui</i> (F)
11	<i>The Amityville Horror</i> (USA)	<i>Y-a-t-il un pilote dans l'avion?</i> (USA)
12	<i>Mc Vicar</i> (UK)	<i>L'Inspecteur la bavure</i> (F)
13	<i>Last Feelings</i> (Italy)	<i>Trois hommes à abattre</i> (F)
14	<i>Yanks</i> (UK)	<i>La Femme flic</i> (F)
15	<i>Friday the 13th</i> (USA)	<i>Manhattan</i> (USA)
16	<i>One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> (USA)	<i>Shining</i> (USA)
17	<i>The Aristocats</i> (USA)	<i>On a volé la cuisse de Jupiter</i> (F)
18	<i>The Bermuda Triangle</i> (USA)	<i>Un amour de coccinelle</i> (USA)
19	<i>The Wanderers</i> (USA)	<i>Le Livre de la jungle</i> (USA)
20	<i>Breaking Glass</i> (UK)	<i>La Cage aux folles 2</i> (F/Italy)

1981

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Superman II</i> (UK)	<i>Le Professionnel</i> (F)
2	<i>For Your Eyes Only</i> (UK)	<i>La Boum</i> (F)
3	<i>Flash Gordon</i> (UK)	<i>Les Aventuriers de l'arche perdue</i> (USA)
4	<i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i> (USA)	<i>Rox et Rouky</i> (USA)
5	<i>Any Which Way You Can</i> (USA)	<i>Viens chez moi j'habite chez une copine</i> (F)
6	<i>Clash of the Titans</i> (UK)	<i>Les Uns et les autres</i> (F)
7	<i>Private Benjamin</i> (USA)	<i>Rien que pour vos yeux</i> (UK)
8	<i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i> (USA)	<i>La Chèvre</i> (F)
9	<i>The Elephant Man</i> (UK)	<i>Le Maître d'école</i> (F)
10	<i>Tess</i> (F/UK)	<i>Moi, Christiane F.</i> (Germany)
11	<i>The Jazz Singer</i> (USA)	<i>Pour la peau d'un flic</i> (F)
12	<i>Chariots of Fire</i> (UK)	<i>La Soupe aux choux</i> (F)
13	<i>Airplane!</i> (USA)	<i>Le Roi des cons</i> (F)
14	<i>Caligula</i> (Italy)	<i>Garde à vue</i> (F)
15	<i>The Blue Lagoon</i> (USA)	<i>Les Fourberies de Scapin</i> (F)

16	<i>Excalibur</i> (Ireland)	<i>Les Hommes préfèrent les grosses</i> (F)
17	<i>History of the World II</i> (USA)	<i>Les 101 dalmatiens</i> (USA)
18	<i>The Cannonball Run</i> (USA)	<i>Le Choix des armes</i> (F)
19	<i>The Postman Always Rings Twice</i> (USA)	<i>La Belle au bois dormant</i> (USA)
20	<i>Popeye</i> (USA)	<i>Excalibur</i> (UK)

1982

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Arthur</i> (USA)	<i>L'As des as</i> (F)
2	<i>Chariots of Fire/Gregory's Girl</i> (UK)	<i>E.T.l'extra-terrestre</i> (USA)
3	<i>Porky's</i> (USA)	<i>Deux heures moins le quart avant Jésus-Christ</i> (F)
4	<i>The Fox and the Hound</i> (USA)	<i>La Chèvre</i> (F)
5	<i>Condorman</i> (USA)	<i>Le Gendarme et les gendarmettes</i> (F)
6	<i>Annie</i> (USA)	<i>La Guerre du feu</i> (F/Canada)
7	<i>Rocky III</i> (USA)	<i>Les Sous-doués en vacances</i> (F)
8	<i>Herbie Goes Banana</i> (USA)	<i>Mad Max 2</i> (Australia)
9	<i>Firefox</i> (USA)	<i>Les Misérables</i> (F)
10	<i>Who Dares Win</i> (UK)	<i>La Balance</i> (F)
11	<i>Mad Max 2</i> (Australia)	<i>Tout feu tout flamme</i> (F)
12	<i>The Empire Strikes Back</i> (USA)	<i>La Folle histoire du monde</i> (USA)
13	<i>Poltergeist</i> (USA)	<i>Rox et Rouky</i> (USA)
14	<i>Private Lessons</i> (USA)	<i>La Boum 2</i> (F)
15	<i>Death Wish II</i> (USA)	<i>Le Grand pardon</i> (F)
16	<i>The French Lieutenant's Woman</i> (UK)	<i>La Passante du sans-souci</i> (F)
17	<i>Star Trek II</i> (USA)	<i>Les Aristochats</i> (USA)
18	<i>Monty Python's Life of Brian</i> (UK)/ <i>Airplane!</i> (USA)	<i>Tête à claques</i> (F)
19	<i>An American Werewolf in London</i> (USA)	<i>Missing</i> (USA)
20	<i>Pink Floyd-The Wall</i> (UK)	<i>Mad Max</i> (Australia)

1983

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>E.T. (USA)</i>	<i>Les Dieux sont tombés sur la tête</i> (South Africa)
2	<i>Return of the Jedi</i> (USA)	<i>Le Marginal</i> (F)
3	<i>Octopussy</i> (UK)	<i>L'Été meurtrier</i> (F)
4	<i>Gandhi</i> (UK)	<i>Banzai</i> (F)
5	<i>Tootsie</i> (USA)	<i>Papy fait de la résistance</i> (F)
6	<i>Superman III</i> (UK)	<i>Flashdance</i> (USA)
7	<i>An Officer and a Gentleman</i> (USA)	<i>Les Compères</i> (F)
8	<i>Staying Alive</i> (USA)	<i>Tootsie</i> (USA)
9	<i>Airplane II</i> (USA)	<i>Le Ruffian</i> (F)
10	<i>Monty Python's The Meaning of Life</i> (UK)	<i>E.T. l'extra-terrestre</i> (USA)
11	<i>Flashdance</i> (USA)	<i>Blanche Neige et les sept nains</i> (USA)
12	<i>The Dark Crystal</i> (UK)	<i>Le Retour du Jedi</i> (USA)

13	<i>Tron</i> (USA)	<i>L'Oeil du tigre</i> (USA)
14	<i>Educating Rita</i> (UK)	<i>Octopussy</i> (UK)
15	<i>War Games</i> (USA)	<i>Rambo</i> (USA)
16	<i>Local Hero</i> (UK)	<i>J'ai épousé une ombre</i> (F)
17	<i>First Blood</i> (USA)	<i>Gandhi</i> (UK)
18	<i>Porky's II</i> (USA)	<i>Tonnerre de feu</i> (USA)
19	<i>Sophie's Choice</i> (USA)	<i>Le Battant</i> (F)
20	<i>Friday the 13th III</i> (USA)	<i>La Balance</i> (F)

1984

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</i> (USA)	<i>Marche à l'ombre</i> (F)
2	<i>Never Say Never Again</i> (UK)	<i>Indiana Jones et le temple maudit</i> (USA)
3	<i>The Jungle Book</i> (USA)	<i>Les Morfalous</i> (F)
4	<i>Police Academy</i> (USA)	<i>Joyeuses Pâques</i> (F)
5	<i>Sudden Impact</i> (USA)	<i>A la poursuite du diamant vert</i> (USA)
6	<i>Terms of Endearment</i> (USA)	<i>Tchao Pantin</i> (F)
7	<i>Educating Rita</i> (UK)	<i>Greystoke</i> (UK)
8	<i>Trading Places</i> (USA)	<i>Pinot, simple flic</i> (F)
9	<i>Greystoke</i> (UK)	<i>Les Ripoux</i> (F)
10	<i>Jaw III</i> (USA)	<i>Gremlins</i> (USA)
11	<i>Footlose</i> (USA)	<i>La Vengeance du serpent à plume</i> (F)
12	<i>Splash</i> (USA)	<i>Fort Saganne</i> (F)
13	<i>The Woman in Red</i> (USA)	<i>Amadeus</i> (USA)
14	<i>The Company of Wolves</i> (UK)	<i>Merlin l'enchanteur</i> (USA)
15	<i>Scarface</i> (USA)	<i>Carmen</i> (F/Italy)
16	<i>101 Dalmatians</i> (USA)	<i>Vive les femmes</i> (F)
17	<i>Yentl</i> (USA)	<i>Rue Barbare</i> (F)
18	<i>Romancing the Stone</i> (USA)	<i>Joli Coeur</i> (F)
19	<i>The Sword in the Stone</i> (USA)	<i>Le Jumeau</i> (F)
20	<i>Lady and the Tramp</i> (USA)	<i>Ghostbuster</i> (USA)

1985

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Ghostbuster</i> (USA)	<i>Rambo II</i> (USA)
2	<i>A View to a Kill</i> (UK)	<i>Les Spécialistes</i> (F)
3	<i>Gremlins</i> (USA)	<i>Trois hommes et un couffin</i> (F)
4	<i>Rambo II</i> (USA)	<i>Les Ripoux</i> (F)
5	<i>Beverly Hills Cop</i> (USA)	<i>Le Flic de Beverly Hills</i> (USA)
6	<i>Police Academy II</i> (USA)	<i>Terminator</i> (USA)
7	<i>Santa Claus</i> (UK)	<i>La Déchirure</i> (UK)
8	<i>A Passage to India</i> (UK)	<i>Retour vers le futur</i> (USA)
9	<i>101 Dalmatians</i> (USA)	<i>P.R.O.F.S.</i> (F)
10	<i>Desperately Seeking Susan</i> (USA)	<i>Parole de flic</i> (F)
11	<i>Mad Max beyond Thunderstorm</i> (Australia)	<i>La Forêt d'émeraude</i> (UK)

12	<i>The Killing Fields</i> (UK)	<i>Mad Max au delà du dôme du tonnerre</i> (Australia)
13	<i>Witness</i> (USA)	<i>Dangereusement vôtre</i> (UK)
14	<i>Return to Oz</i> (USA)	<i>Hold-up</i> (F)
15	<i>Amadeus</i> (USA)	<i>Dune</i> (USA)
16	<i>The Care Bears Movie</i> (USA)	<i>Subway</i> (F)
17	<i>Peter Pan</i> (USA)	<i>Witness</i> (USA)
18	<i>The Never Ending Story</i> (Germany)	<i>Amadeus</i> (USA)
19	<i>Morons from Outer Space</i> (UK)	<i>Taram et le chaudron magique</i> (USA)
20	<i>A Private Function</i> (UK)	<i>Police</i> (F)

1986

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Back to the Future</i> (USA)	<i>Jean de Florette</i> (F)
2	<i>Rocky IV</i> (USA)	<i>Trois hommes et un couffin</i> (F)
3	<i>Out of Africa</i> (USA)	<i>Rocky IV</i> (USA)
4	<i>Top Gun</i> (USA)	<i>Out of Africa</i> (USA)
5	<i>Santa Claus</i> (UK)	<i>Manon des sources</i> (F)
6	<i>Aliens</i> (UK)	<i>Highlander</i> (UK)
7	<i>Police Academy III</i> (USA)	<i>Tenue de soirée</i> (F)
8	<i>Clockwise</i> (UK)	<i>37°2 le matin</i> (F)
9	<i>Teen Wolf</i> (USA)	<i>Commando</i> (USA)
10	<i>The Jewel of the Nile</i> (USA)	<i>Cobra</i> (USA)
11	<i>Mona Lisa</i> (UK)	<i>Top Gun</i> (USA)
12	<i>Peter Pan</i> (USA)	<i>Les Fugitifs</i> (F)
13	<i>Bambi</i> (USA)	<i>Les Frères Pétard</i> (F)
14	<i>The Karate Kid II</i> (USA)	<i>Mission</i> (UK)
15	<i>A Room with a View</i> (UK)	<i>Le Diamant du nil</i> (USA)
16	<i>Hannah and her Sisters</i> (USA)	<i>Pirates</i> (F)
17	<i>The Black Cauldron</i> (USA)	<i>L'Effrontée</i> (F)
18	<i>Spies Like Us</i> (USA)	<i>Karaté Kid II</i> (USA)
19	<i>Cobra</i> (USA)	<i>Alien le retour</i> (UK)
20	<i>Jagged Edge</i> (USA)	<i>La Couleur pourpre</i> (USA)

1987

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Crocodile Dundee</i> (Australia)	<i>Crocodile Dundee</i> (Australia)
2	<i>The Living Daylights</i> (UK)	<i>Le Nom de la rose</i> (F)
3	<i>Beverly Hills Cop II</i> (USA)	<i>Platoon</i> (USA)
4	<i>Platoon</i> (USA)	<i>Le Grand chemin</i> (F)
5	<i>Police Academy IV</i> (USA)	<i>Les Enfants du silence</i> (USA)
6	<i>The Golden Child</i> (USA)	<i>La Bamba</i> (USA)
7	<i>Labyrinth</i> (USA)	<i>Les Fugitifs</i> (F)
8	<i>Superman IV</i> (UK)	<i>Le Flic de Beverly Hills II</i> (USA)
9	<i>Full Metal Jacket</i> (USA)	<i>Lévy et Goliath</i> (F)
10	<i>Blind Date</i> (USA)	<i>Les Incorruptibles</i> (USA)
11	<i>The Untouchables</i> (USA)	<i>Au revoir les enfants</i> (F)
12	<i>The Voyage Home-Star Trek IV</i> (USA)	<i>Over the top</i> (USA)

13	<i>The Mission</i> (UK)	<i>La Mouche</i> (USA)
14	<i>The Fly</i> (USA)	<i>Manon des sources/Jean de Florette</i> (F)
15	<i>Lethal Weapon</i> (USA)	<i>Tuer n'est pas jouer</i> (UK)
16	<i>The Color of Money</i> (USA)	<i>Full Metal Jacket</i> (USA)
17	<i>Mannequin</i> (USA)	<i>L'Arme fatale</i> (USA)
18	<i>Nightmare on Elm Street III</i> (USA)	<i>Les Aventures de Bernard et Bianca</i> (USA)
19	<i>Personal Services</i> (UK)	<i>Predator</i> (USA)
20	<i>The Witches of Eastwick</i> (USA)	<i>Le Sicilien</i> (USA)

1988

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Fatal Attraction</i> (USA)	<i>L'Ours</i> (F)
2	<i>Crocodile Dundee II</i> (Australia)	<i>Le Grand bleu</i> (F)
3	<i>Three Men and a Baby</i> (USA)	<i>Qui veut le peau de Roger Rabbit?</i> (USA)
4	<i>A Fish Called Wanda</i> (UK)	<i>La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille</i> (F)
5	<i>Coming to America</i> (USA)	<i>Le Dernier empereur</i> (Italy)
6	<i>Good Morning Vietnam</i> (USA)	<i>Crocodile Dundee II</i> (Australia)
7	<i>The Last Emperor</i> (UK/Italy)	<i>Liaison fatale</i> (USA)
8	<i>The Jungle Book</i> (USA)	<i>Bagdad Café</i> (Germany)
9	<i>Buster</i> (UK)	<i>Le Livre de la jungle</i> (USA)
10	<i>Beetlejuice</i> (USA)	<i>Rambo III</i> (USA)
11	<i>Cry Freedom</i> (UK)	<i>Un Prince à New York</i> (USA)
12	<i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i> (USA)	<i>Itinéraire d'un enfant gâté</i> (F)
13	<i>Big</i> (USA)	<i>Les Chouans</i> (F)
14	<i>Wish You Were Here</i> (UK)	<i>Robocop</i> (USA)
15	<i>Police Academy V</i> (USA)	<i>L'Etudiante</i> (F)
16	<i>Robocop</i> (USA)	<i>L'Empire du soleil</i> (USA)
17	<i>Wall Street</i> (USA)	<i>Frantic</i> (USA)
18	<i>Predator</i> (USA)	<i>Double détente</i> (USA)
19	<i>Inner Space</i> (USA)	<i>L'Insoutenable légèreté de l'être</i> (USA)
20	<i>The Running Man</i> (USA)	<i>Le Proviseur</i> (USA)

1989

Box-office	Britain	France
1	<i>Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade</i> (USA)	<i>Rain man</i> (USA)
2	<i>Who Framed Roger Rabbit?</i> (USA)	<i>Indiana Jones et la dernière croisade</i> (USA)
3	<i>Batman</i> (UK/USA)	<i>Le Grand bleu</i> (F)
4	<i>Rain Man</i> (USA)	<i>Les Jumeaux</i> (USA)
5	<i>The Naked Gun</i> (USA)	<i>Batman</i> (USA)
6	<i>Licence to Kill</i> (UK/USA)	<i>Permis de tuer</i> (USA/UK)
7	<i>Lethal Weapon II</i> (USA)	<i>Un poisson nommé Wanda</i> (UK)
8	<i>Twins</i> (USA)	<i>Gorilles dans la brume</i> (USA)
9	<i>Dead Poets Society</i> (USA)	<i>Les Dieux sont tombés sur la tête, la suite</i> (USA)

10	<i>Cocktail</i> (USA)	<i>Trop belle pour toi</i> (F)
11	<i>Shirley Valentine</i> (UK)	<i>Abyss</i> (USA)
12	<i>A Fish Called Wanda</i> (UK)	<i>L'Arme fatale II</i> (USA)
13	<i>See No Evil, Hear No Evil</i> (USA)	<i>Oliver et compagnie</i> (USA)
14	<i>The Accused</i> (USA)	<i>Cinema Paradiso</i> (F)
15	<i>Moonwalker</i> (USA)	<i>Camille Claudel</i> (F)
16	<i>Scandal</i> (UK)	<i>Les Liaisons dangereuses</i> (USA)
17	<i>The Karate Kid III</i> (USA)	<i>L'Ours</i> (F)
18	<i>Back to the Future II</i> (USA)	<i>Cocktail</i> (USA)
19	<i>Working Girl</i> (USA)	<i>Itinéraire d'un enfant gâté</i> (F)
20	<i>Die Hard</i> (USA)	<i>Après la guerre</i> (F)

Appendix four: Film magazines in France and Britain during the 1980s

French magazines:

- Les Fiches du cinéma*
- Le Film français*
- Image et Son* (which would become *La Revue du cinéma* and *Le Mensuel du cinéma*) (1946, 1992)
- La Revue du cinéma* (started as *Image et Son* in 1946, became *Le Mensuel du cinéma* in 1992)
- Les Cahiers du cinéma*
- Positif*
- Cinéma*
- Le Technicien du film*
- Etudes cinématographiques*
- L'Avant-scène cinéma*
- Jeune cinéma*
- Les Cahiers de la cinémathèque*
- Cinématographe*
- Mad Movies*
- Première*
- Filméchange*
- CinémAction*
- Banc titre*
- Actua-Ciné*
- Caméra stylo*
- Hors cadre*
- Cinefix*
- Starfix*
- Iris*
- Avancées cinématographiques* (would become *Vertigo*)
- Voir*
- Les Cahiers du 7^{ème} art*
- Présence du cinéma français*
- Archives*
- Impact*
- Visions international*
- Studio*
- Vertigo*
- Cinémotion*

British magazines:

Empire

Films and Filming

Film Dope

Monthly Film Bulletin

Screen

Screen International

Sight and Sound

Appendix five: Césars and BAFTAs

Césars given in the 1980s

Best film:

1980: *Tess* (Roman Polanski)

1981: *Le Dernier métro* (François Truffaut)

1982: *La Guerre du feu* (Jean-Jacques Annaud)

1983: *La Balance* (Bob Swain)

1984: *A nos amours* (Maurice Pialat)/*Le Bal* (Ettore Scola)

1985: *Les Ripoux* (Claude Zidi)

1986: *Trois hommes et un couffin* (Coline Serreau)

1987: *Thérèse* (Alain Cavalier)

1988: *Au revoir les enfants* (Louis Malle)

1989: *Camille Claudel* (Bruno Nuytten)

Best director:

1980: Roman Polanski (*Tess*)

1981: François Truffaut (*Le Dernier métro*)

1982: Jean-Jacques Annaud (*La Guerre du feu*)

1983: Andrzej Wajda (*Danton*)

1984: Ettore Scola (*Le Bal*)

1985: Claude Zidi (*Les Ripoux*)

1986: Michel Deville (*Péril en la demeure*)

1987: Alain Cavalier (*Thérèse*)

1988: Louis Malle (*Au revoir les enfants*)

1989: Jean-Jacques Annaud (*L'Ours*)

Best actor:

1980: Claude Brasseur (*La Guerre des polices*)

1981: Gérard Depardieu (*Le Dernier métro*)

1982: Michel Serreau (*Garde à vue*)

1983: Philippe Léotard (*La Balance*)

1984: Coluche (*Tchao Pantin*)

1985: Alain Delon (*Notre histoire*)

1986: Christophe Lambert (*Subway*)

1987: Daniel Auteuil (*Jean de Florette*)

1988: Richard Bohringer (*Le Grand chemin*)

1989: Jean-Paul Belmondo (*Itinéraire d'un enfant gâté*)

Best actress:

1980: Miou-Miou (*La Dérobade*)

1981: Catherine Deneuve (*Le Dernier métro*)

1982: Isabelle Adjani (*Possession*)
1983: Nathalie Baye (*La Balance*)
1984: Isabelle Adjani (*L'Été meurtrier*)
1985: Sabine Azéma (*Un dimanche à la campagne*)
1986: Sandrine Bonnaire (*Sans toit ni loi*)
1987: Sabine Azéma (*Mélo*)
1988: Anémone (*Le Grand chemin*)
1989: Isabelle Adjani (*Camille Claudel*)

BAFTA given in the 1980s:

Best film:

1980: *Manhattan* (Woody Allen)
1981: *The Elephant Man* (Jonathan Sanger)
1982: *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson)
1983: *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough)
1984: *Educating Rita* (Lewis Gilbert)
1985: *The Killing Fields* (Roland Joffé)
1986: *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (Woody Allen)
1987: *A Room with a View* (James Ivory)
1988: *Jean de Florette* (Claude Berri)
1989: *Dead Poets Society* (Peter Weir)

Best director:

1980: Francis Ford Coppola (*Apocalypse Now*)
1981: Akira Kurosawa (*Kagemusha*)
1982: Louis Malle (*Atlantic City*)
1983: Richard Attenborough (*Gandhi*)
1984: Bill Forsyth (*Local Hero*)
1985: Win Wenders (*Paris/Texas*)
1986: not given
1987: Woody Allen (*Hannah and her Sisters*)
1988: Oliver Stone (*Platoon*)
1989: Kenneth Branagh (*Henry V*)

Best actor:

1980: Jack Lemmon (*The China Syndrome's*)
1981: John Hurt (*The Elephant Man*)
1982: Burt Lancaster (*Atlantic City*)
1983: Ben Kingsley (*Gandhi*)
1984: Michael Caine (*Educating Rita*) and Dustin Hoffman (*Tootsie*)
1985: Dr Haing S Ngor (*The Killing Fields*)
1986: William Hurt (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*)
1987: Bob Hoskins (*Mona Lisa*)
1988: Sean Connery (*The Name of the Rose*)
1989: Daniel Day Lewis (*My Left Foot*)

Best actress:

1980: Jane Fonda (*The China Syndrome's*)
1981: Judy Davis (*My Brilliant Career*)
1982: Meryl Streep (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*)

1983: Katharine Hepburn (*On Golden Pond*)
1984: Julie Walters (*Educating Rita*)
1985: Maggie Smith (*A Private Function*)
1986: Peggy Ashcroft (*A Passage to India*)
1987: Maggie Smith (*A Room with a View*)
1988: Anne Bancroft (*84 Charing Cross Rd*)
1989: Pauline Collins (*Shirley Valentine*)

Filmography

British cinema

Another Country (Marek Kanievska, 1984)
Argie (Jorge Blanco, 1985)
Babylon (Franco Rosso, 1980)
Bend It Like Beckham (Gurinder Chadha, 2001)
Betrayal (David Jones, 1982)
Bhaji on the Beach (Gurinder Chadha, 1993)
Blood Red Roses (John McGrath, 1986)
Boys from the Blackstuff (Philip Saville/TV series)
Brassed Off (Mark Herman, 1996)
Brazil (Terry Gilliam, 1985)
Breaking Glass (Brian Gibson, 1980)
Britannia Hospital (Lindsay Anderson, 1982)
Brookside (Soap Opera)
The Browning Version (Anthony Asquith, 1951)
Burning an Illusion (Menelik Shabazz, 1981)
Business as Usual (Lezli-An Barrett, 1987)
Carry On films
The Chain (Jack Gold, 1984)
Chariots of Fire (Hugh Hudson, 1981)
Clockwise (Christopher Morahan, 1985)
Comfort and Joy (Bill Forsyth, 1984)
Dance with a Stranger (Mike Newell, 1985)
Defence of the Realm (David Drury, 1985)
Diamond Skulls (Nick Broomfield, 1989)
Distant Voices, Still Lives (Terence Davies, 1988)
Doll's Eye (Jan Worth, 1982)
Eat the Rich (Peter Richardson, 1987)
Educating Rita (Lewis Gilbert, 1983)
The Emerald Forest (John Boorman, 1985)
Empire State (Ron Peck, 1987)
Fatherland (Ken Loach, 1986)
Faulty Towers (TV series)
A Fish called Wanda (Charles Crichton, 1988)

Fords on Water (Barry Bliss, 1983)
The French Lieutenant's Woman (Karel Reisz, 1981)
The Full Monty (Peter Cattaneo, 1997)
Gandhi (Richard Attenborough, 1982)
Giro City (Karl Francis, 1982)
The Good Father (Mike Newell, 1987)
Gregory's Girl (Bill Forsyth, 1981)
Greystoke (Hugh Hudson, 1984)
Handsworth Songs (Black Audio, 1986)
Heavenly Pursuits (Charles Gormley, 1986)
High Hopes (Mike Leigh, 1988)
The Hit (Stephen Frears, 1984)
Hope and Glory (John Boorman, 1987)
Hue and Cry (Charles Crichton, 1947)
If... (Lindsay Anderson, 1968)
James Bond films
Killing Dad (Michael Austin, 1989)
The Killing Fields (Roland Joffé, 1984)
A Kind of Loving (John Schlesinger, 1962)
The Lavender Hill Mob (Charles Crichton, 1951)
A Letter to Brezhnev (Chris Bernard, 1985)
Life is Sweet (Mike Leigh, 1990)
Living on the Edge (Michael Grigsby, 1987/Documentary)
Local Hero (Bill Forsyth, 1983)
The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (Tony Richardson, 1962)
The Long Good Friday (John McKenzie, 1981)
Look Back in Anger (Tony Richardson, 1959)
Looks and Smiles (Ken Loach, 1981)
Made in Britain (Alan Clarke, 1983)
Maurice (James Ivory, 1987)
Meantime (Mike Leigh, 1983)
Mona Lisa (Neil Jordan, 1986)
The Monty Python films
Moonlighting (Jerzy Skolimowski, 1982)

My Beautiful Laundrette (Stephen Frears, 1985)
My Name is Joe (Ken Loach, 1998)
My Son the Fanatic (Udayan Prasad, 1997)
Naked (Mike Leigh, 1993)
The Nature of the Beast (Franco Rosso, 1988)
O Lucky Man (Lindsay Anderson, 1973)
Paris by Night (David Hare, 1988)
Party Party (Terry Winsor, 1983)
A Passage to India (David Lean, 1984)
The Passion of Remembrance (Isaac Julien and Maureen Blackwood, 1986)
Personal Services (Terry Jones, 1986)
Play for Today (BBC Drama)
Playing Away (Horace Ové, 1986)
The Ploughman's Lunch (Richard Eyre, 1983)
A Prayer for the dying (Mike Hodges, 1988)
The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (Ronald Neame, 1969)
A Private Function (Malcolm Mowbray, 1985)
Prospects (TV series)
Questions of Leadership (Ken Loach, 1983/Documentary)
Riff Raff (Ken Loach, 1990)
Rita, Sue and Bob Too (Alan Clarke, 1987)
A Room with a View (James Ivory, 1986)
Runners (Charles Sturridge, 1983)
Sammy and Rosie Get Laid (Stephen Frears, 1987)
Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (Karel Reisz, 1960)
Scandal (Michael Caton-Jones, 1989)
Secrets and Lies (Mike Leigh, 1996)
She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjamas (John Goldsmidt, 1984)
Shirley Valentine (Lewis Gilbert, 1989)
Steaming (Joseph Losey, 1984)
Stormy Monday (Mike Figgis, 1987)
Strapless (David Hare, 1988)
Superman films
Sweeney (TV series)

A Taste of Honey (Tony Richardson, 1961)
Territories (Sankofa Film and Video, 1986)
That Sinking Feeling (Bill Forsyth, 1979)
The Titfield Thunderbolt (Charles Crichton, 1953)
Trainspotting (Danny Boyle, 1995)
Twentyfourseven (Shane Meadows, 1999)
Vroom (Beeban Kidron, 1988)
Wetherby (David Hare, 1985)
Which Side are you on? (Ken Loach, 1984/Documentary)
Widows (TV series)
Wish You Were Here (David Leland, 1987)
Withnail and I (Bruce Robinson, 1987)
Young Soul Rebel (Isaac Julien, 1983)
Z.O.O. (Peter Greenaway, 1985)

French cinema

A bout de souffle (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959)
Ali au pays des merveilles (Djouhra Abouda, 1975)
Les Amants du Pont-Neuf (Leos Carax, 1991)
Un amour à Paris (Merzak Allouache, 1986)
L'Amour nu (Yannick Bellon, 1988)
L'Année prochaine si tout va bien... (Jean-Loup Hubert, 1981)
A nos amours (Maurice Pialat, 1983)
A nous les garçons (Michel Lang, 1984)
Au pays des Juliets (Medhi Charef, 1991)
Au revoir les enfants (Louis Malle, 1987)
Les Apprentis (Pierre Salvatori, 1995)
L'Argent (Robert Bresson, 1983)
Attention une femme peut en cacher une autre (George Lautner, 1983)
L'Autre France (Ali Ghalem, 1974)
L'Autre monde (Merzak Allouache, 2000)
Bab el Oued City (Merzak Allouache, 1994)
Le Bahut va craquer (Michel Nerval, 1980)
Baisers volés (François Truffaut, 1968)

Le Bal (Ettore Scola, 1983)
La Balance (Bob Swain, 1982)
Les Baliseurs du désert (Nacer Khemir, 1985)
Baton Rouge (Rachid Bouchareb, 1985)
La Belle équipe (Julien Duvivier, 1936)
Black Mic Mac (Thomas Gilou, 1986)
Le Bon plaisir (Francis Girod, 1983)
Boudu sauvé des eaux (Jean Renoir, 1932)
La Boum (Claude Pinoteau, 1980)
La Boum 2 (Claude Pinoteau, 1982)
Boy meets girl (Leos Carax, 1983)
Les Bronzés font du ski (Patrice Leconte, 1979)
Camomille (Mehdi Charef, 1987)
Ça commence aujourd'hui (Bertrand Tavernier, 1999)
Le Chaud lapin (Pascal Thomas, 1974)
Cheb (Rachid Bouchareb, 1990)
Chouchou (Merzak Allouache, 2002)
Les Cigognes n'en font qu'à leur tête (Didier Kaminka, 1989)
Circulez y'a rien à voir (Patrice Leconte, 1983)
La Comédie du travail (Luc Moullet, 1987)
Les Compères (Francis Veber, 1983)
Le Complexe du kangourou (Pierre Jolivet, 1986)
Conseil de famille (Constantin Costa-Gavras, 1986)
Le Corniaud (Gérard Oury, 1965)
Côté cœur, côté jardin (Bertrand van Effenterre, 1984)
Cours privé (Pierre Granier-Deferre, 1986)
La Crime (Philippe Labro, 1983)
La Crise (Coline Serreau, 1992)
Danton (Andrzej Wajda, 1982)
De bruit et de fureur (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 1987)
Le Déjeuner de bébé (Louis Lumière, 1895)
Le Dernier combat (Luc Besson, 1983)
Dernier été (Robert Guédiguian and Frank Le Wita, 1981)
De sable et de sang (Jeanne Labrune, 1987)

Descente aux enfers (Francis Girod, 1986)
Le Destin de Juliette (Aline Isserman, 1982)
Détective (Jean-Luc Godard, 1985)
La Dilettante (Pascal Thomas, 1999)
Diva (Jean-Jacques Beineix, 1980)
L'Effrontée (Claude Miller, 1985)
En avoir ou pas (Laetitia Masson, 1995)
L'Enfance de l'art (Francis Girod, 1988)
Escalier C (Jean-Charles Tacchella, 1984)
L'Etat de grâce (Jacques Rouffio, 1986)
Etats d'âme (Jacques Fansten, 1986)
L'Eté de nos quinze ans (Marcel Jullian, 1983)
L'Eté meurtrier (Jean Becker, 1982)
L'Etudiante (Claude Pinoteau, 1988)
La Femme de ma vie (Régis Wargnier, 1986)
La Femme de mon pote (Bertrand Blier, 1983)
Femmes de personne (Christopher Frank, 1983)
La Fille de Keltoum (Medhi Charef, 2001)
La Fille de quinze ans (Jacques Doillon, 1988)
La Fille seule (Benoît Jacquot, 1995)
La Garce (Christine Pascale, 1984)
Garçon (Claude Sautet, 1983)
Garde à vue (Claude Miller, 1981)
Le Grain de sable (Pomme Meffre, 1982)
La Grande vadrouille (Gérard Oury, 1966)
La Guerre des polices (Robin Davis, 1979)
L'Homme blessé (Patrice Chéreau, 1982)
L'Homme fragile (Claire Clouzot, 1980)
Les Innocents (André Téchiné, 1987)
Inspecteur La Bavure (Claude Zidi, 1980)
Inspecteur Lavardin (Claude Chabrol, 1985)
Interdit aux moins de treize ans (Jean-Louis Bertucelli, 1982)
Je vous aime (Claude Berri, 1980)
Le Jour se lève et les conneries commencent (Claude Mulot, 1981)

Les Keufs (Josiane Balasko, 1987)
Kung Fu Master (Agnès Varda, 1987)
Laisse béton (Serge Le Péron, 1983)
Le Lieu du crime (André Téchiné, 1985)
Little Senegal (Rachid Bouchareb, 2000)
Loulou (Maurice Pialat, 1979)
Ma femme s'appelle reviens (Patrice Leconte, 1981)
Le Maître d'école (Claude Berri, 1981)
Maladie d'amour (Jacques Deray, 1987)
Manon des sources (Claude Berri, 1986)
Marche à l'ombre (Michel Blanc, 1984)
Le Marginal (Jacques Deray, 1983)
Marie-Line (Medhi Charef, 1999)
Les Maris, les femmes, les amants (Pascal Thomas, 1988)
Mauvais sang (Leos Carax, 1986)
Mektoub (Ali Ghalem, 1970)
Mémoire d'immigrés (Yasmina Benguigui, 1997/Documentary)
Un monde sans pitié (Eric Rochant, 1989)
Mon oncle (Jacques Tati, 1958)
Monsieur Hire (Patrice Leconte, 1988)
Mortelle randonnée (Claude Miller, 1982)
Noce blanche (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 1989)
Nord (Xavier Beauvois, 1992)
No Woman's Land (Medhi Charef, 1986)
Une nuit à l'Assemblée nationale (Jean-Pierre Mocky, 1988)
L'Oeil au beur(re) noir (Serge Meynard, 1987)
Le Paltoquet (Michel Deville, 1986)
Les Parents ne sont pas simples cette année (Marcel Jullian, 1983)
Paroles et musique (Elie Chouraqui, 1984)
Pauline à la plage (Eric Rohmer, 1983)
Le Père Noël est une ordure (Jean-Marie Poiré, 1982)
Péril en la demeure (Michel Deville, 1985)
La Petite voleuse (Claude Miller, 1988)
Pierre et Djemila (Gérard Blain, 1986)

Pinot simple flic (Gérard Jugnot, 1984)
Pleure pas la bouche pleine (Pascal Thomas, 1973)
Police (Maurice Pialat, 1985)
Poulet au vinaigre (Claude Chabrol, 1985)
Pour cent briques, t'as plus rien! (Edouard Molinaro, 1982)
Pour la peau d'un flic (Alain Delon, 1981)
Pourquoi pas! (Coline Serreau, 1977)
Poussière de vie (Rachid Bouchareb, 1994)
Prends 10000 balles et casse-toi (Mahmoud Zemmouri, 1980)
P.R.O.F.S. (Patrick Schulmann, 1985)
P'tit con (Gérard Lauzier, 1983)
Le Quatrième pouvoir (Serge Leroy, 1985)
Quelques jours avec moi (Claude Sautet, 1987)
Qu'est-ce qu'on attend pour être heureux? (Coline Serreau, 1982)
Rendez-vous (André Téchiné, 1985)
Les Ripoux (Claude Zidi, 1984)
Les Risques du métier (André Cayatte, 1967)
Rive droite, rive gauche (Philippe Labro, 1984)
Romuald et Juliette (Coline Serreau, 1989)
Sac de noeuds (Josiane Balasko, 1985)
Sans toit ni loi (Agnès Varda, 1985)
Sauve toi Lola (Michel Drach, 1986)
Scout toujours (Gérard Jugnot, 1985)
Une semaine de vacances (Bertrand Tavernier, 1980)
La Smala (Jean-Loup Hubert, 1984)
Subway (Luc Besson, 1985)
Taxi Boy (Alain Page, 1986)
Tchao Pantin (Claude Berri, 1983)
Tenue de soirée (Bertrand Blier, 1986)
Le Thé à la menthe (Abdelkrim Bahloul, 1984)
Le Thé au harem d'Archimède (Mehdi Charef, 1985)
Train d'enfer (Roger Hanin, 1984)
37°2 le matin (Jean-Jacques Beneix, 1985)
36 Fillette (Catherine Breillat, 1987)

Trois hommes et un couffin (Coline Serreau, 1985)
Trop belle pour toi (Bertrand Blier, 1989)
Vanille Fraise (Gérard Oury, 1989)
La Vie de famille (Jacques Doillon, 1984)
La Vie de Jésus (Bruno Dumont, 1997)
La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille (Etienne Chatilliez, 1988)
La Vie rêvée des anges (Erick Zonka, 1998)
Viens chez moi, j'habite chez une copine (Patrice Leconte, 1980)
Les Visiteurs (Jean-Marie Poiré, 1993)
Vivement Dimanche (François Truffaut, 1983)
Vous habitez chez vos parents? (Michel Fermaud, 1983)
Le Voyage à Paimpol (John Berry, 1985)
Voyage en capital (Ali Akika, 1977)
Z (Constantin Costa-Gavras, 1969)
Zéro de conduite (Jean Vigo, 1933)

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